United Nations S/PV.7843

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7843rd meeting

Monday, 19 December 2016, 10.05 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. González de Linares Palou	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 30 August to 17 November 2016 (S/2016/1037)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-44813 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 30 August to 17 November 2016 (S/2016/1037)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/1064, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/1037, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 30 August to 17 November 2016.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2330 (2016).

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.

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United Nations S/PV.7844

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7844th meeting
Monday, 19 December 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. González de Linares Palou	(Spain)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2016/1049)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-44819 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2016/1049)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Sweden and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan; and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Her Excellency Ms. Joanne Adamson, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2016/1049, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings from Mr. Yamamoto, Mr. Fedotov and Ambassador Gerard Van Bohemen, Permanent Representative of New Zealand in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

I now give the floor to Mr. Yamamoto.

Mr. Yamamoto: The National Unity Government marked its second anniversary with a continued effort towards advancing its reform agenda and enhancing public services. Despite security challenges and some political volatility, I continue to see opportunities and hope in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government demonstrated unity at the recent Warsaw Summit and at the Brussels Conference, while stressing its shared commitment to security, development and reform priorities. Afghan leaders have continued working to overcome their differences in order to advance the Government's reform agenda. The message from the international community sent at the highest level was clear: Afghanistan will not stand alone. The significant international financial commitments, in both security and development terms, allow Afghanistan to achieve greater stability and self-reliance.

I welcome the reconstitution of the electoral management bodies, which must advance electoral reforms and preparations for elections. It is essential to restore public confidence in the democratic process in Afghanistan, which provides an important opportunity to take steps in that direction. The commencement of prosecutions by the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre shows the Government's seriousness in tackling corruption. The Citizens Charter was adopted to enable a more systematic approach to eradicate poverty and provide services to the people of Afghanistan.

Afghan citizens are returning home in record numbers. In the past six months alone, the country has received hundreds of thousands of returnees, from both Pakistan and Iran. While those returnees are being welcomed back to Afghanistan, they face an uncertain future, alongside the internally displaced persons, including half a million newly displaced just this year. Over 1.5 million people are on the move this year. It is likely that the coming year will likely see similar numbers of people. The sheer scale of that population movement will necessarily bring with it strains and pressure on the economy and on social services and could further swell the number of those seeking employment.

I welcome the swift response of the international community to the United Nations appeal for the provision of immediate lifesaving assistance for displaced persons and returnees. I also wish to acknowledge the work that is being undertaken by the Government to put in place programmes that will enable both displaced persons and returnees to integrate into the economy and with their host communities.

The longer-term needs of integration must be addressed with urgency if we are to prevent more people sinking into absolute poverty. The scale of return will require further international support and flexibility in

the use of existing funding mechanisms. Meanwhile, we must make greater efforts to ensure due recognition of the voluntary nature of return, and for the process of return to be undertaken with dignity and respect.

Refugees return to Afghanistan with hopes. Despite all the efforts by the international community and the Government, a better future is not possible without peace. In 2016, thousands and thousands of Afghans have been killed in the conflict, and tens of thousands more have been wounded. Such human suffering and tragedy are unacceptable. The conflict also erodes the living conditions of people and deprives the country of opportunities for development and growth. This year, we saw a decrease of approximately 50 per cent in economic investment, which is needed to achieve a sustainable future. The international commitments for development will not be able to deliver their full potential in the absence of peace. Financial resources that are spent on the conflict could be utilized for the economic prosperity of Afghanistan.

We all know that the conflict in Afghanistan has no military solution. Once again, I call upon the Taliban to commit to direct talks with the Afghan Government, without preconditions. The Taliban leadership must reconsider the notion that their objectives can be achieved only on the battlefield. At stake is the future of the Afghan people and the country. Are the differences really irreconcilable? Are compromise and accommodation really not possible?

All Afghans must come together and work through their problems and find ways to accommodate their differences, for their own joint future. There are issues of mutual interests and high priorities to all parties, such as lessening the number of civilian casualties. Identifying such common interests could be a starting point for dialogue. The vast majority of Afghans believe that their country should be a sovereign, united, Islamic country, free from interference by any foreign Powers. That basic agreement on fundamental principles should make it possible to reach a peace agreement, as long as countries in the region are prepared to play their part in a positive, supportive way.

It takes courage to enter into a peace process. It is not an admission of defeat. It is a recognition of reality. An endless war will ruin the country and harm its people. The only path to a meaningful peace is through an intra-Afghan dialogue. The eventual process must be inclusive, involving Afghans from every stratum of society, including women and young people. Women in particular can play a crucial role in helping to shape a lasting peace.

The peace agreement with Hizb-i Islami shows that the Government is prepared to negotiate on key issues such as the release of prisoners, the lifting of sanctions and the group's integration into the political life of Afghanistan. The fact that the agreement was reached is a demonstration of its serious intentions, and its successful implementation should address any remaining doubts and help to unite Afghans, and could pave the way for further peace agreements. I welcome the Government's assurances that the rights of Afghans, including victims of gross violations of human rights, will not be compromised in the implementation of the peace agreement.

Peace and stability in Afghanistan are not in the interest of Afghanistan alone; other countries in the region will also benefit on both the security and economic fronts. I am encouraged by their active efforts to assist Afghanistan with its social, economic and human-resources development. Impressive investments are being made in regional infrastructure development. The progress in that area was reflected in the outcome of the sixth Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Amritsar, where we also saw the countries of the region concur on improving cooperation on their counter-terrorism efforts. But can we not collaborate and cooperate more in order to put an end to the conflict and long-standing human suffering in Afghanistan? I urge every country of the region to ask itself what else it can do to help create an environment conducive to peace in Afghanistan and the region. There are many possible areas of cooperation and steps that they can take to improve the prospects for peace, such as increased consultations, exchanges of information and people-to-people contacts.

I am encouraged by the positive messages of support for an Afghan-led peace process from the countries of the region, and I look forward to seeing them produce positive results. We, the United Nations, remain committed to working for peace in Afghanistan in cooperation with all concerned.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Yamamoto for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Fedotov.

Mr. Fedotov: I am grateful for this opportunity to update the Council on the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) against illicit drugs in Afghanistan and their impact on health, development and security. Since my last briefing (see S/PV.7802), UNODC has published its *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016*, referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1049), which shows a worrying reversal of the efforts to combat this persistent problem. Opium poppy cultivation has grown by 10 per cent and production by 43 per cent, an increase driven by a 30 per cent rise in the average opium yield. In the past year, the number of provinces that are poppy-free has gone down from 14 to 13, while eradication, which has dropped by 91 per cent, is in free fall.

The efforts of UNODC and its partners in Afghanistan are continuing against that background and that of the bitter ongoing insurgency. The Brussels Conference on Afghanistan and the resulting communiqué underlined the importance of these activities. Countries and organizations committed to a sustained and integrated approach to dealing with the production and trafficking of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals. The Conference highlighted the importance of fighting organized crime, including money laundering, corruption and the financing of terrorism, as well as of treating and rehabilitating drug users. The communiqué expressed the international community's determination to counter all forms of terrorism and extremism.

UNODC activities, delivered through our integrated and comprehensive projects and programmes, are targeting those and other challenges. Our country programme for Afghanistan, linked to our Regional Programme for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries, is assisting in building the capacity of the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the narcotics police. Earlier this month, I visited the Domodedevo Project, supported by Russia and Japan, which is using professional training to improve the capacity of Afghanistan's narcotics police. UNODC is promoting cooperation in the region through the Regional Programme, its Triangular and Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Initiatives, the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre and the Gulf Cooperation Council Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs.

In order to build links between the regional bodies operating along the major opiate trafficking routes, UNODC has introduced a networking-the-networks initiative designed to leverage information-sharing. Our work forms part of an overall interregional drug-control response to illicit trafficking. Its activities include support, including in the field, for the Paris Pact Initiative. UNODC recently established an air cargo unit at the Kabul international airport. Afghanistan is now one of the first countries in the world to implement the air-cargo segment of the UNODC-World Customs Organization Container Control Programme.

In the essential area of health, UNODC supports treatment services founded on scientific evidence and human rights, especially for vulnerable children and young people exposed to drugs, as well as their families.

Afghan heroin is also linked to terrorism and the insurgency. The bulk of opium cultivation takes place in areas controlled by the Taliban, and they receive tens of millions of dollars through their taxes on drug trafficking. UNODC welcomes the Afghan Government's decision to develop a national action plan on violent extremism, and we are helping to implement it. While we appreciate donors' interest in alternative development projects being carried out in Afghanistan in cooperation with other United Nations agencies and the Government, much more needs to be done. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is driving momentum for more ambitious alternative development projects for Afghan farmers who are currently growing illicit crops. Illicit drugs fuel corruption. UNODC, as a guardian of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, is working with Afghan counterparts to draft a new, comprehensive anti-corruption law based on international standards and best practices.

Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda promotes peaceful and inclusive societies. UNODC is working with the relevant Afghan authorities to enhance the capacity of financial intelligence units and regulatory and criminal justice institutions to analyse, detect, investigate and prosecute cases of economic crime. The new National Peace and Development Framework and the national drug action plan underscore the Afghan Government's willingness and determination to counter illicit production and trafficking and to reduce demand.

UNODC will continue to work over the long term with partners, including the Afghan Government, to counter illicit drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism in Afghanistan and in Western and Central Asia, as well

as along the main drug trafficking routes to the rest of the world. In its pursuit of that strategy, UNODC is helping to integrate those activities into economic and national security planning. Afghanistan is hard pressed under the impact of illicit drugs, and I call on the international community to remain fully committed to helping to alleviate that destructive threat.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Fedotov for that briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Van Bohemen.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I thank Special Representative Yamamoto and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their support of the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). Close coordination with UNAMA is important to the overall effectiveness of the 1988 sanctions regime.

The 1988 Sanctions Committee aims to deter the Taliban and associates through tools such as an assets freeze, a travel ban and an arms embargo. At the same time, the 1988 sanctions regime is intended to support the peace and reconciliation process, including through the use of the delisting process and the process for granting exemptions to enable a list of persons to engage in peace and reconciliation negotiations and other approved activities.

The existence of the 1988 sanctions regime matters to the Taliban. Removal from what the Taliban call the United Nations blacklist is consistently in the top three demands of the group. The Taliban also follow developments in the 1988 Sanctions Committee closely, often issuing statements on reports of the Monitoring Team and activities of the Committee. However, despite the sanctions measures, the Taliban have retained the ability to conduct attacks on Afghan forces, the Afghan people and the international presence in Afghanistan. The latest report (see S/2016/842) of the Monitoring Team, which was presented to the Committee in October, outlines how the Taliban continue their offensive against the Government of Afghanistan following the leadership transfer from Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and Haibatullah Akhundzada in May of this year.

The Taliban's positions on peace talks with the Government of Afghanistan have hardened and clashes between the Taliban and Government forces have increased between 10 and 13 per cent, as compared to those in 2015. Such clashes continue to be funded mainly by the narcotics economy and the illegal extraction of natural resources. The situation is also complicated by the presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan.

While there are many structures and frameworks in place, the implementation of the sanctions measures can be uneven. The Committee continues to receive reports of listed Taliban travelling without approved exemptions from the Committee. That issue clearly needs to be addressed. The Committee would also like to encourage Member States to play a more active role in providing information that would help to keep the sanctions list as up-to-date as possible. If Member States provide that information, it will support their own implementation efforts. War could also be done to target narcotics smugglers financially supporting the Taliban.

The Taliban's income from narcotics is estimated at around $400 million per year. Cutting off that financial stream could have a significant impact on the Taliban's ability to resource its offensive against the Government of Afghanistan. Six of the Committee's meetings this year were focused on the nexus between narcotics smuggling and the Taliban. The Committee received briefings on counter-narcotics efforts from Afghanistan's Deputy Interior Minister, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Monitoring Team. Such efforts help to identify individuals who may be suitable for designation on the 1988 list.

The overall effectiveness of the 1988 sanctions measures also relies on close coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and with the region. That is one of the reasons I recently travelled to Afghanistan as Chair of the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee and the Security Council Committee establishsed pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, to engage directly with interlocutors and the Afghan Government. I was pleased with the level of engagement the delegation received while in Kabul, including meetings with President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, the Minister of the Interior and the Governor of the Central Bank of Afghanistan.

The meetings in Kabul showed that there is potential for greater use of the 1988 sanctions regime to deter the Taliban and to support the peace process. The legal frameworks are in place to implement the sanctions measures, for example, the Central Bank of Afghanistan outlined a comprehensive framework for the tracing and freezing of assets of listed individuals and entities. However, such structures are effective only against listed individuals, who are identifiable. There are many associates of the Taliban who are not on the list and others lacking sufficient identifiers. Such structures are also effective only within Afghanistan. Cross-border flows of money, narcotics, arms and foreign terrorist fighters are challenges that extend to the wider region.

The Committee therefore welcomes the various commitments made by the Government of Afghanistan during the visit to engage more actively with the sanctions regime, including to provide the names of narcotics smugglers who financially support the Taliban and to request the listing of the Taliban leadership. In turn, the Committee is working on providing forms to assist with applying for exemptions from the assets freeze and travel-ban measures and hopes to have those available on its website shortly. The Committee looks forward to continued close engagement with UNAMA, Afghanistan and regional States, under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan for 2017-2018.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Van Bohemen for his briefing.

On behalf of all the members of the Security Council, I should like to thank the three briefers for their useful and informative reports.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan): Let me congratulate Spain on its successful leadership of the Security Council this month. We wish to thank Ambassador Román Oyarzun Marchesi and his team at the Spanish Mission for their dedicated efforts as penholder for Afghanistan during the past two years and welcome Japan's assumption of this important task. I thank the outgoing Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his recent report (S/2016/1049) on the situation in Afghanistan. We are grateful to Ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, for his comprehensive briefing and outstanding leadership of the United Nations work in Afghanistan.

Two years after the three-pronged transition, with focus on reforms and renewed international commitments, Afghanistan has defied odds by standing on its own and managing complex challenges, notwithstanding a high price in lost lives and denied opportunities. From the perspective of security, in recent months our armed forces have proved their strength by repulsing unprecedented waves of attacks in various provinces. Economically, Afghanistan's regional connectivity has been growing fast. And politically, our vibrant course of democratization continues with electoral reform on track. However, with a high rate of return of refugees, coupled with the increased number of internally displaced persons resulting from terrorist attacks, we have fresh humanitarian challenges ahead of us this winter and beyond.

In 2016, parallel to the challenges, we witnessed significant developments that reflected strong international military and civilian support for Afghanistan. In July, our international partners at the NATO Warsaw Summit pledged continued assistance towards the sustainability of our security forces. In September, the Council reaffirmed its full support to Afghanistan through presidential statement S/PRST/2016/14. In October, the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan renewed the partnership for prosperity and peace between our country and the international community. In November, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 71/9 entitled, "The situation in Afghanistan", which reiterated the commitment of the international community for a stable Afghanistan. Those developments represent the clear consolidation of international consensus on Afghanistan, for which we are deeply grateful. On behalf of my Government and my people, let me thank all Member States for their positive contributions to Afghanistan's stability and progress. In particular, we are grateful to the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and Turkey for forging the Warsaw Summit consensus on Afghanistan, and the European Union for galvanizing renewed international development commitments for our country.

Effective counter-terrorism requires a clear regional and global security architecture and constructive engagement among the relevant stakeholders. For too long, terror has found a comfort zone in the occasional tectonic shifts and grinds of security fault lines,

along with negative rivalries of regional and global powers. Scattered, fragmented and slow counter-terrorism measures have been exploited by terrorists to manoeuvre, spread violence and create discord among people. In the face of growing terrorism worldwide, we must increase trust, collaboration and coordination among relevant Member States for a comprehensive response based on the rule of law and established international norms.

In that context, any kind of outside contact with the Taliban or other such groups without the prior knowledge and approval of the Government of Afghanistan is seen as a legitimization of terror, a direct breach of our sovereignty and a clear contravention of the United Nations sanctions regimes and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which will not be tolerated. Fighting terror with terror, no matter what the justification, is a sign of weakness of the civilized world and a return to impasse and stagnation. Certainly, our people will suffer most from this irrational and reckless policy.

In the campaign against terrorism, Afghanistan ought to be a symbol of international cooperation. We welcome the regional and global convergence of legitimate interests in our security, political stability and development. The surest way to protect those interests in Afghanistan is to desist from ill-conceived attempts at regional orchestration of Afghanistan's insecurity, enhance official State-to-State cooperation and support our national security forces.

At the peak of the international military presence in 2012, the casualty rate of coalition forces was over 400, and the approximate cost of war amounted to around $110 billion; in 2016, the casualty rate has dropped to 16, and financial costs are estimated to be less than one-eleventh of that figure. Hence, today our forces are at the forefront of countering terrorism on behalf of the world and need to be fully supported.

It must be noted that in October and November, various provinces of Afghanistan became the target of terrorist attacks that are unprecedented in our country's modern history. The enemy's intention was to establish a parallel geography for the Taliban, but the commitment and bravery of our security forces prevented terrorists from realizing their wicked ambitions.

Due to its sensitive geostrategic location, Afghanistan firmly believes in regionalism and multilateral diplomacy. The sixth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, held two weeks ago in Amritsar, acknowledged the support that terrorism derives in our region and called for the dismantling of regional terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens. Further, it called upon all States to take action against those terrorist entities in accordance with their respective national counter-terrorism policies, their international obligations and the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Conference welcomed and supported Afghanistan's initiative in taking the lead in exploring a regional counter-terrorism strategy, in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations. At Amritsar, President Ghani proposed an Asian and international mechanism to verify cross-frontier activities and terrorist operations. Verification of nefarious activities would present our neighbour hard evidence to undercut their plausible deniability and blame games, and shift the focus to where it should be — a unified response to countering terrorism.

At the United Nations level, consideration of new three-tier measures for a more effective counter-terrorism strategy is needed. During our debates, we ought to address the impact of negative State rivalries and State use of violence in pursuit of political objectives on the growth of terrorism. At an operational level, we need to refine and enrich relevant existing resolutions or adopt new resolutions to target the drivers of such policies within State structures. At the implementation level, effectively enforcing the counter-terrorism resolutions, including the sanctions regimes on the Taliban, Al-Qaida and Da'esh, and those who use the State apparatus to nurture them, can have a significant impact on war and peace in Afghanistan. We want the timely inclusion of select irredeemable Taliban leaders on the sanctions list and a review of those delisted so far. There is an urgent need for increased and more meaningful interaction between the United Nations counter-terrorism bodies and Afghan security agencies. We welcome the Sanctions Committee's November visit to Afghanistan, where relevant issues were discussed with the senior leadership.

Winter in Afghanistan begins in two days. For the Taliban and their supporters in our neighbourhood, that usually marks the official end of their fighting season. Most Taliban militiamen return to the warmth of madrasas in Pakistan for rest and recuperation and to refuel for the next fighting season. Often, around this time of year, the regional orchestrator of violence in our country reverts to the notion of peace talks. Thus

their seasonality and tactical use of war and peace continues, leaving little room for genuine peace efforts. Nevertheless, we once again urge all Afghan Taliban groups and their foreign supporters to enter into genuine peace talks with the Government of Afghanistan. In that endeavour, we recognize the importance of the role of neighbouring countries, in particular Pakistan, and other regional partners.

We have made some progress towards the implementation of the peace agreement signed with Hezb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin) on 29 September. The cessation of violence with former belligerent members of the group has held for nearly three months. Their disarmament and reintegration require careful planning. The agreement presents an opportunity to put the future together, not justify the past. Making the agreement work will necessitate collective and careful efforts from all stakeholders, across domestic and international spectrums. Those who want to take advantage of this historic opportunity should refrain from all derogatory, divisive and xenophobic activities. The Government pardon is not a justification of their past violent activities and should neither be misused nor abused. It is noteworthy: the people of Afghanistan have the full right to seek justice, in accordance with their fundamental rights. We expect the implementation of the agreement to improve security, strengthen the political stability and national unity of the Afghan people and set a good precedent in the peace process.

Recently, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah have displayed a renewed level of consensus in the work of the national unity Government, in particular in relation to the appointment of new commissioners at the electoral bodies, which marks a decisive step forward to strengthening the credibility, transparency and integrity of our future elections. We expect the Independent Election Commission to announce the date of our upcoming parliamentary and district council elections in the near future. Talks on other subjects are still ongoing to strengthen our political stability and democratic process.

Afghanistan has progressed steadily on the path of economic cooperation through regional connectivity and tangible development projects. The recent inauguration of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan railway, following the arrival of a cargo train from China, and the construction of the Iran-Afghanistan railway, together with the forthcoming cargo air corridor between Afghanistan and India, are reviving centuries-old trade routes that will help revitalize the regional economy. However, insecurity presents a primary obstacle to our economic reform and infrastructure-building agenda.

The Taliban's recent statement of support for major development projects has no genuine basis. As mentioned, insecurity created by the Taliban undercuts economic development in the country and challenges regional connectivity. On 17 December, just a couple of days ago, the Taliban targeted five female airport personnel in Kandahar airport. That is their real nature. Any expression of support will be deemed legitimate only when expressed through deeds, such as the immediate cessation of violence and their genuine joining of the peace process. Compared to previous years, the rate of civilian casualties has gone down marginally in Afghanistan. However, terrorists continue to attack soft targets mercilessly, as manifested by the rising percentage of child casualties this year. The recent targeting of religious gatherings was aimed at stoking ethnic and sectarian tensions among our people. But let me reiterate that Afghans stand united in the face of such divisive strategies.

The Government of Afghanistan, in collaboration with the United Nations and other international partners, continues to work on creating equal opportunities for women, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000). We have also improved workplace conditions for women and strengthened the legal framework for their physical protection. In that regard, the recently revised penal code is among our other recent achievements. We are highly determined to bring all human rights violators to justice, including those in the highest positions of Government. It is important that national and international stakeholders further strengthen the independence of the Afghan judiciary without politicizing or ethnicizing the course of justice.

During the past 10 months, Afghanistan has witnessed the return of nearly 1 million of its nationals. Increased policing and uncertainty over their status in Pakistan, including the fear of eviction, have led to a huge surge of returnees. That fact, along with internal displacements resulting from conflict, might exacerbate the already difficult humanitarian crisis as winter approaches. We invite the international community to support the flash appeal of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to provide immediate life-saving assistance while we continue to work on a comprehensive solution.

Recently, we have initiated a string of consultations with relevant line ministries, United Nations agencies and other related stakeholders to provide immediate response packages during the winter season to needy returnees and internally displaced persons. In the broader context, we are seeking long-term, viable solutions for those problems. In that context, the further assistance of the international community remains of vital importance.

Our efforts to curb the menace of narcotics and to break its link with criminality are ongoing. In October, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, along with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, released the executove summary of the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016*, which noted an increase in poppy production. However, our counter-narcotics operations continue unabated with recent unprecedented seizures. One thing is clear — insecurity creates fertile ground for drug production. We maintain the view that a viable solution to the narcotics problem must be based on the principle of shared responsibility. A verification regime of cultivation, production, trafficking and demand would probably prove that Afghanistan beneficits the least from drug profits.

We have reached the end of an eventful year, with key developments that signify an enormous leap forward for Afghanistan. The regional and international consensus has reached new heights, as reflected in the Warsaw NATO Summit, the Brussels Conference and Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference, and the unanimous adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/9 on Afghanistan. Together, those events have established a firm foundation to enhance our strategic cooperation into the new year.

The Council and the international community are well aware that terrorism remains a constant threat to the security of all peoples and societies. That said, let us approach the coming year with a new confidence and commitment to secure a stable and self-reliant Afghanistan. We must not forget that our joint partnership is in fact a strategic investment for a more safe and prosperous world order.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council. To enable the Security Council to make good use of the time available, I ask members to restrict their statements to five minutes and thank them for their cooperation.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. Meanwhile, I would like to make a few points in my national capacity.

Three months ago, the Council discussed the situation in Afghanistan (see S/PV.7771) and adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2016/14, in support of the country's security, economic and development challenges. Has it had a positive impact on the ground? To a certain degree, it has.

First, some encouraging progress has been achieved in countering corruption and deterring the terrorist threat. Secondly, the Brussels Conference, held in October, secured pledges in support of Afghanistan's State-building and socioeconomic development. Thirdly, a peace deal that was signed with one of moderate armed factions, Hezb-i Islami (Gulbuddin), became a useful contribution to the restoration of normalcy and the reconciliation in the territories under that group's control. Fourthly, regional cooperation was strengthened by investment and infrastructure projects that laid the foundation for improving Afghanistan's trade capacities and building a business-friendly environment. Fifthly, efforts were redoubled to counter narcotics trafficking and production, in particular by promoting saffron as a substitute crop for poppies.

Despite those developments, much remains to be done. Rivalry among high-level Afghan officials and political tensions between the parliamentary and legislative branches, as well as another postponement of long-awaited parliamentary elections, directly affect the country's ability to adequately promote good governance, the rule of law, anti-corruption measures and human rights. We believe that it is high time for all Afghan stakeholders to demonstrate real unity in their efforts to achieve sustainable and comprehensive peace and national reconciliation.

However, the prospects for those endeavours remain dim. The repeated flat refusal of the Taliban leaders to negotiate has undercut attempts of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process to create an environment conducive to a peace process. In that regard, we see the need for the Quadrilateral Coordination Group to find common ground with representatives of the Taliban's moderate wing.

In this Chamber, we have often heard statements to the effect that the national reconciliation process

must be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led. At the same time, we have seen continued attempts behind the back of the Government of Afghanistan to negotiate with the Taliban and even to grant the terrorists safe haven, train them and provide them military assistance. In that light, calls to lift the Security Council sanctions on the Taliban leadership as an incentive to bring it back to the negotiations table appear rather unconvincing, to say the least. That is particularly revelatory when such calls echo similar demands by the same terrorist organization.

We find it unacceptable that, six months after his appointment, the new leader of the Taliban is still not included on the United Nations sanctions list. In that regard, we support the relevant call just made by the delegation of Afghanistan. Ukraine believes that the sanctions are an effective tool in persuading terrorists to renounce their aggression against the Afghan nation and earnestly participate in peace negotiations. Their removal from the list should be possible only when their deeds match their words. That means the disarmament of combat units, the restoration of peace, and non-interference in the functioning of public institutions, as was the case with the Hezb-i Islami (Gulbuddin).

Regional cooperation should also focus on finding ways to effectively disrupt the Taliban and other terrorist groups' financing by suppressing the narcotics trade. With regard to the latter, the recent findings of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which are contained in its *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016*, are alarming. Regardless of national and international efforts to combat the narcotics threat, the total area of opium poppy cultivation has further increased, coinciding with a major decrease in activities aimed at eradicating it. What is also extremely worrying is that, according to reports, farmers continue to resist such suppression operations by directly attacking eradication teams, even within the Government-controlled areas.

The protection of civilians in Afghanistan continues to be an increasingly complex challenge. Although the Government announced a national policy to mitigate civilian casualties, the number of collateral victims, especially among women and children, is still growing. And the causes, in particular the indiscriminate shelling and bombing, are attributable to both parties in the conflict. Beyond any doubt, fighting the terrorist threat is a top priority. Yet it can hardly be seen as a victory when the number of neutralized terrorists equals the number of civilians who have lost their lives in the course of the counter-terrorist operations concerned.

We urge the Afghan Government to ensure that all such violations of international humanitarian law are thoroughly investigated, with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and that the victims and their families are provided with the appropriate remedies. The implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security is also of paramount importance for ensuring a stable future for the country through the suspension of gender-based violence and the elevation of women as full and equal partners. Moreover, the deteriorating displacement crisis in Afghanistan requires urgent attention. The Afghan authorities should address the needs of internally displaced persons and returnees, including by urgently scaling up humanitarian aid to provide them access to basic services and support their sustainable reintegration.

Without any doubt, there are numerous obstacles that make it difficult for Afghanistan to resolve on their own most of the challenges I have mentioned. That is why the international community has to continue assisting the country, which is in need. I hope that in future debates the list of problems that I mentioned today will be much shorter, as some of them will have already been addressed by the Afghan Government.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are following the security situation in Afghanistan very closely. We are concerned about its sudden and growing deterioration, especially in the north of the country, in which the Taliban has recently become increasingly active. The elimination of the Taliban leader, Mullah Mansoor, has led to a strengthening of the influence of the irreconcilable radicals, which only exacerbates the current situation in the country. The recent attacks by militants against the United States military base at Bagram and the German Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif are stark cases in point.

We support the policy of the Government of Afghanistan aimed at achieving national reconciliation. We stand ready to provide assistance towards making progress in the negotiation process, including through a flexible approach to the possible easing of the sanctions regime of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), if that does not run contrary to the national interests of Afghanistan. We took note that a peace agreement

was signed by the Government of Afghanistan and the Hekmatyar party. Much will depend uon how it is implemented in practice. The main goal of the national reconciliation process is to get the Taliban involved in the process. Thus far, that goal has not been achieved. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group format has not arrived at breakthrough.

Unfortunately, the basic problems that have been facing the international military contingents in the country for the past 15 years remain unresolved. That applies to the previous NATO International Security Assistance Force, which left the country, and the current Resolute Support Mission. We underscore in particular that only the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces can provide for the stabilization of the military and political situation in the country. For that reason, we are providing them with multidimensional support. The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation has provided 10,000 automatic rifles and 2.1 million cartridges to them at no charge. Russia has agreed to re-export four Mi-25 helicopter gunships to Afghanistan from India. The Russian Federation will continue to provide assistance in forming a capable Afghan army and police force and continue to train their personnel through Russian line agencies.

Large-scale drug production in Afghanistan poses a serious threat to the very stability of Afghanistan itself, the region and the world in general. Moreover, besides being nefarious in and of itself, narcotics production provides substantial financial support for terrorism. In that regard, we believe that it is necessary to step up the efforts of the international community in combating the Afghan drug trade. We are concerned about the sharp increase in drug crops, including in the north of the country, and a significant increase in this year's opium poppy crop. The fear is that the growth in drug revenue will lead to an even greater surge in terrorist activity.

We do not wholly understand the attempts to diminish the threat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Afghanistan. That is at variance with various assessments, including that of NATO. Some time ago, the commander of the United States and NATO Forces in Afghanistan, General Nicholson, stated that the terrorist group ISIL had intended to create a caliphate in Afghanistan and that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan had joined that cause to form what is known as the Wilayat Khorasan. We expect that that information will be duly reflected and evaluated in the relevant United Nations documentation, including in the quarterly reports to the Secretary-General. According to what we were told by the representatives of the Afghan leadership, the number of ISIL fighters in their country has reached several thousand. There are also confirmed reports of links to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Taliban movement, especially in the north, and the Lashkar-e-Taiba movement. There have also been reports of the presence of ISIL training camps and safe havens in Afghanistan, in which people from the Central Asian States and the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus are being trained, and 700 terrorist families from Syria have already arrived. The intensity of the fighting in Syria and Iraq is leading insurgents to increasingly turn their attention towards Afghanistan as a country in which they can find refuge and establish a new base for expanding their influence in neighbouring countries.

We are rather perplexed by the recent statement by General Nicholson with regard to the support that Russia is allegedly providing the Taliban, thereby undermining Washington, NATO and Kabul's efforts to combat terrorism. That kind of statement reflects an attempt to shift the blame, as we say in my country. We recall the facts indicating that some of our partners are not averse to cooperating with the extremist and terrorist groups in Afghanistan. We are aware of numerous cases in which ISIL fighters were redeployed to the northern provinces of Afghanistan by unmarked helicopters. We must ascertain who is doing that and why. Many questions also remain concerning a massive attack by the Taliban against the administrative centres in the provinces of Badakhshan, Helmand and Farah. Once again, we reiterate that Russia is not conducting any secret negotiations that could undermine the national security of Afghanistan. Our contacts with the representatives of the Taliban are limited to the task of providing for the security of Russian nationals in Afghanistan and are aimed at moving the Taliban towards joining with the process of national reconciliation, while making sure that officials in Kabul maintain a leading role.

We look positively on the fact that the international community reaffirmed its commitment to support Afghanistan at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October. We hope that the new financial package will play a positive role. At the same time, we note that the Government of Afghanistan has been presented with a number of conditions. If those conditions are not met, then the volume of the assistance could be reduced. We also note that countries have arrived a better

understanding of the regional context of a settlement of the Afghan conflict, and there is an increase in the number of regional forums that are focused on that issue. At the same time, we think that it is important to make sure that regional actors should assume the leading role in the work of those forums.

We are convinced that assistance to Afghanistan should be carried out through proven existing structures, primarily the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). As is known, Afghanistan received observer status in the SCO in 2012. In 2015, at the SCO Summit in Ufa, Afghanistan officially applied to become a full-fledged member. At this stage, in order to make that process more dynamic, we think that it would be advisable to restore the SCO-Afghanistan contact group. We also see good prospects for strengthening cooperation between the counter-terrorism and anti-narcotics operations of Afghanistan and the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

Ms. Coleman (United States of America): Since we last met to discuss Afghanistan in September (see S/PV.7771), we have been encouraged by notable progress on a number of fronts. Perhaps most significantly, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah are working together to strengthen the cohesion of the National Unity Government. The transparent and consultative process to select the members of the Independent Election Commission, who were sworn into office on 22 November, demonstrates the commitment of both leaders to build a merit-based, ethnically inclusive Government that is committed to promoting peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

In spite of the escalating attacks against the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, Government officials and civilians, which were highlighted in Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto's briefing, we commend the Afghan Government for its continued commitment to an inclusive, Afghan-led peace process. The agreement signed on 29 September between the Afghan Government and Hizb-i Islami establishes a precedent for the Government to negotiate a political settlement with armed groups in the interests of Afghans.

We continue to call upon the Taliban to enter into negotiations with the Government. Our message to the Taliban and armed groups is that they will not be able to derail Afghanistan's future through terrorist attacks. However, they are welcome to lay down their arms, negotiate peace and choose to contribute to the future of their country. Meanwhile, recent strong commitments made by the international community are encouraging. The $15.2 billion in development assistance through 2020 that was pledged at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October is an important example. Also at the Brussels Conference, President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah underscored their commitment to establishing a functional, accountable and sustainable Government through the implementation of the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework and the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. We support them in those efforts. Of course, difficult challenges remain.

We are concerned that continued attacks by the Taliban, affiliates of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other armed groups are undermining security and hindering the development that Afghanistan so desperately needs. As we have seen since the beginning of the conflict, the vast majority of victims in those attacks are civilians. In the first nine months of 2016, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 2,562 civilian deaths and 5,835 injuries. Those are tragic additions to a needless toll of death and suffering that includes many Government workers and members of security forces. Since mid-July, Afghanistan has experienced a spike in the number of Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghan migrants returning from Pakistan. To date, 372,000 Afghan refugees have returned from Pakistan and 662,000 undocumented Afghans have returned from Iran and Pakistan. The number of persons internally displaced by the conflict in Afghanistan also continues to increase significantly. We remain concerned by those numbers and the possibility of a humanitarian emergency as winter sets in.

We are also aware that returns to Afghanistan may increase again in the spring, which could potentially overtax an already stressed humanitarian response system. In order to avoid a humanitarian emergency, the return of refugees and migrants to Afghanistan should be voluntary, humane and in line with applicable international law. Amid those clear challenges, some specific steps could help Afghanistan make progress. The National Unity Government needs to institutionalize clear, consultative, multi-ethnic selection processes for ministers and senior officials. Anti-corruption initiatives must demonstrate the ability to hold officials

accountable regardless of rank, in order to ensure that Afghanistan's resources are used for development, security and public services.

After the promising progress made in naming an Independent Election Commission, we look forward to the completion of key election reforms and credible parliamentary elections at the appropriate time. Against that backdrop, UNAMA has played a critical role in helping Afghanistan build its future. In upcoming months, we also encourage UNAMA to help prepare Afghan women to run as political candidates and serve as community leaders.

My last point is that my delegation would like to thank Ambassador Van Bohemen and the delegation of New Zealand for its able stewardship of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities over the past two years. We consider that Committee an important tool, not just for countering the threat of the Taliban, but also for promoting peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks the delegation of Spain for convening this open meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Yury Fedotov, and Ambassador Gerard Van Bohemen for their briefings.

China applauds the unceasing efforts of the Afghan Government to safeguard national stability, promote national reconciliation and advance economic development. On the other hand, we should be cognizant of the fact that Afghanistan still faces grave political, economic and security challenges. The road to peace and development remains long, and the mission remains arduous. It is China's hope that the international community will continue to treat the issue of Afghanistan as a priority and will continue its support and aid to Afghanistan.

The first prong of such an effort involves drastically improving the security situation in Afghanistan. The international community should lend strong support to the capacity-building of the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces, so as to shore up Afghanistan's independent defence and counter-terrorism capabilities and effectively tackle terrorism, transnational crime and drug trafficking. We hope that the rest of the region will continue to cooperate with Afghanistan in the security sector so as to jointly build a secure regional environment.

The second prong involves steadfastly advancing the process of national reconciliation in Afghanistan. The international community should spare no effort to support an inclusive, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned reconciliation process and support the efforts of the parties concerned to settle their differences through dialogue. The quadrilateral coordination group, which is made up of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States, will continue to play a positive role in galvanizing that process.

The third prong involves supporting Afghanistan's development guided by Afghanistan's own initiatives. China commends the Afghan Government for drawing up the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework. We hope that the international community will deliver on its aid pledges and provide targeted assistance in line with the development strategy drawn up by the Government of Afghanistan and based on the country's actual needs on the ground.

The fourth prong involves helping Afghanistan integrate into regional economic cooperation. Just recently, the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 71/9, on the situation in Afghanistan. That resolution refers to the importance of the One Belt, One Road initiative — the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Twenty-first century Maritime Silk Road — to the promotion of Afghanistan's economic development and regional cooperation. We hope that the countries concerned will work, as outlined in the resolution, to strengthen regional economic cooperation and connectivity and help Afghanistan join the mighty tide of regional development.

China commends the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and supports the Mission's positive role in helping Afghanistan safeguard its national security, promote economic development and improve its governance capacities.

We will continue to support the work of UNAMA and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto. China has been consistently supported the reconciliation process, characterized by Afghan leadership and ownership, as well as Afghanistan's capacity-building in the security sector to combat

terrorism and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's positive role in this area.

China steadfastly supports Afghan integration in regional development cooperation and will work with the Afghan Government to implement the Chinese-Afghan memorandum of understanding on the One Belt, One Road initiative and to strengthen our cooperation in areas such as business, trade, energy and infrastructure.

China is ready to work with the rest of the international community and continue our tireless endeavour to help Afghanistan achieve peace, stability and development as soon as possible.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I join other Security Council members in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this discussion on Afghanistan. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, Ambassador Van Bohemen and Mr. Yury Fedotov for their briefings. I also welcome and thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Mr. Saikal, for his statement and participation today.

The briefings we heard today mentioned a number of serious challenges to the Afghan Government. The escalation in the number of armed clashes, setting yet another record level since the United Nations began recording incidents in 2007, is worrisome. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) report on the protection of civilians, which recorded 8,397 civilian casualties between January and September this year, underscores the continued gravity of the situation. Given this high figure, we are deeply concerned about the significant escalation in the number of child casualties, which increased by 15 per cent as compared to the same period last year. Similarly, this year also saw the highest number of newly internally displaced persons, totalling more than 500,000 by the end of November, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Children, which make up 50 per cent of the total numbers, are again the most disproportionately affected group. We reiterate the call for all parties to undertake the necessary measures to uphold their obligations to ensure the safety, security and well-being of all civilians in the country, particularly children, who remain the most vulnerable group.

The continued horrific attacks, for which the Taliban has claimed responsibility, remain a major and persistent challenge to the security situation in the country. Furthermore, the Government of Afghanistan continues to engage in fighting with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and its affiliates and is challenged by anti-Government elements. Malaysia strongly condemns the horrific string of attacks that deliberately target civilians. We also strongly condemn the recent attacks on United Nations operations and staff members in Afghanistan and urge the Government to conduct a thorough investigation to ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable.

Despite the persistent political, security and economic challenges, we commend the Afghan Government's continued resilience and commitment under these difficult circumstances. We are encouraged by the recent peace agreement reached between the Government and Hezb-e-Islami, as we believe the agreement represents a crucial milestone in the Government's unwavering commitment to promoting lasting peace and reconciliation in the country. We hope that the successful implementation of the agreement will contribute to confidence-building and encourage further reconciliation between the Government and other groups in the country. Since the agreement was reached among the Afghan people, we are of the view that the Council should be prepared to support their decision, including by positively considering the possible delisting of the Hezb-e-Islami principals from the sanctions list of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), as requested by the Afghan Government.

Promoting greater social and economic development is another critical imperative in achieving long-lasting prosperity, peace and stability in Afghanistan. In that context, we are encouraged by the recent progress on multiple initiatives to foster close cooperation among Afghanistan, regional partners and the international community. We welcome Afghanistan's continued efforts to deepen engagement with regional partners, including through the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, particularly in the areas of addressing security challenges in the region and enhancing infrastructure development.

We are encouraged by the outcome of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, where the international community pledged $15.2 billion to support Afghanistan's development priorities over the next four years. That is a clear demonstration of the international community's commitment to assisting Afghanistan in

progress towards self-reliance and improving the well-being of its people.

Countering narcotics remains one of the protracted challenges faced by the Afghan Government. Executive Director Fedotov noted in his briefing that the area of opium poppy cultivation increased by 10 per cent in 2016, and potential opium production surged by 43 per cent compared over the year before. More distressingly, eradication efforts decreased by 90 per cent as compared to 2015. All that constitutes a significant reversal of the marginal gains achieved in countering narcotics last year. As narcotics continue to pose serious challenges to the overall security situation and development of Afghanistan, a comprehensive strategy to address all aspects of illicit drugs and its economy must be put in place and fully implemented. In that regard, we are confident that the intensification of efforts and further enhancement of cooperation between the Government and international partners, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, will eventually bring about success in addressing the issue of illicit drugs in a comprehensive manner.

Finally, we wish to think Ambassador Van Bohemen for his briefing on the overall work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) and its Monitoring Team, as well as for his excellent stewardship of the Committee. We welcome and support the initiative of the Chair, which would certainly contribute to enhancing the work and coordination within UNAMA and the 1988 Committee.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Yamamoto and the entire UNAMA team for their tireless efforts under challenging circumstances. We are convinced that the United Nations, with full respect for the principle of the country's sovereignty, will continue to play a significant and contributing role in realizing Afghanistan's aspirations to achieve national unity and lasting stability. To that end, Malaysia reiterates its firm support for the reconciliation and reintegration efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan within the context of respect for the country's democracy and Constitution, non-violence and respect for the rights of all Afghan people.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I join others in thanking all of our briefers. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto said, Afghanistan will not stand alone. I also want to join others in thanking New Zealand for its stewardship of an extremely important committee and for carrying out its very important functions extremely well on behalf of the Council.

The year 2016 has been an important year for Afghanistan: the Warsaw Summit in July and the Brussels Conference in October saw the international community pledge the military and financial support that Afghanistan will need to meet the considerable political and economic challenges of the coming years. We also pledge to support the ambitious reform commitments of the National Unity Government.

Now that the National Unity Government has a clear signal of our support, we look forward to 2017 and to the implementation of the reforms Afghanistan needs for a brighter future. In all of this, the Government and people of Afghanistan will have the United Kingdom's support. I do not think that anyone in this Chamber underestimates just how much there still is to do to ensure that Afghanistan stays on the path to sustained stability. We should focus on three specific points: countering extremists; continuing development efforts; and encouraging regional cooperation.

First, on countering extremists, it is clear that Da'esh is not just a problem to be dealt with in Syria and Iraq. They are a global threat, and Afghanistan has sadly seen that first hand. Less than one month ago, Da'esh claimed the lives of 30 people and left over 70 injured on the streets of Kabul.

The Taliban are compounding the security situation, acting as another armed group in a country that has had more than its fair share. Last week, they stopped a fourth-year student of Kabul Polytechnic University as he was driving home to visit his family. They hanged him in the open, in public, evoking the darkest days of life under Taliban control. And only last weekend, five female security staff were murdered on their way to work in Kandahar. Those are senseless deaths and show that the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, with the NATO Resolute Support Mission, have a tough road ahead.

For our part, the United Kingdom is working closely with the Afghan Government as its seeks to overcome the country's legacy of conflict. As the coalition's leader of the Afghan National Army Officer Academy, we are proudly helping to train the next generation of

military leaders. As we seek to help ensure security on the streets, we also recognize that Afghans must also safe in their own homes. The sad fact is that it is not a reality for many Afghan women. That is why British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson pledged his support for the elimination of violence against women when he spoke with Mr. Abdullah recently.

Secondly, security will always be short-lived if we do not provide a foundation of development for all Afghan people. So we welcome the Government's ambitious Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework. The United Kingdom will be a long-term partner in its delivery. I am proud of our support so far for 7.2 million children, from Kabul to Kandahar, who are going to school thanks to the United Kingdom's support. Over 3 million of them are girls. I call on all members of the Council to follow suit and invest in Afghanistan's future through development.

Thirdly and finally, Afghanistan and its partners must continue to bolster regional relations at both the political and the technical levels. The National Unity Government is charting a course towards stability. If it is to succeed, Afghanistan's neighbours and partners must further empower it, working in lockstep. We welcome the recent Heart of Asia Summit, which reinforced the common interests of Afghanistan and its neighbours. Promoting cooperation across the region through investment in infrastructure, overcoming barriers to trade and pursuing mutually advantageous economic development opportunities is in the entire region's interest.

In conclusion, 2016 has been a year of progress and challenges in Afghanistan. As it draws to a close, we look forward to a more peaceful and prosperous year ahead — a year that sees economic growth and improvements in the delivery of health, education and water, and that sees the lives of ordinary Afghans getting better. All of that will require the sustained political will of the Government and the effective and coordinated support of the rest of us. In that effort, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Council will play a vital supporting role.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Allow me to thank today's briefers for their comprehensive updates on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for Spain's contribution as penholder in our discussions on Afghanistan over the past two years. Japan will try to make a meaningful contribution as penholder, starting in January, by seeking a broad range of opinions from our Council colleagues, Afghanistan, the countries of the area, donors and civil society.

We witnessed two crucial international conferences on Afghanistan this year. At the NATO Summit in July, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to standing with the Afghan people on security matters by providing financial support to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) through the end of 2020 and sustaining the Resolute Support Mission beyond 2016. At the Brussels Conference in October, the international community pledged to continue assistance to Afghanistan for the next four years based on the principle of mutual accountability. We sincerely hope that Afghanistan will soon achieve self-reliance to the point where donors no longer need to announce multi-year pledges.

We urge the National Unity Government to make further efforts to implement its commitments regarding the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework.I would like to note, however, that the role of the Security Council is not to oversee progress on the Framework. What we can do is monitor Afghanistan's continued reform efforts and its initiatives to combat the spread of extremism, and evaluate whether they are contributing to international and regional peace and security. The Council should remain united in supporting Afghanistan as it endeavours to overcome its many challenges.

Sadly, the Secretary-General's most recent report on Afghanistan (S/2016/1049) reveals harsh realities. Few improvements have been seen in terms of political developments and security. A positive note can be seen in the frequent meetings between President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, as well as the lessening of public demands to replace the National Unity Government. We have listened carefully to the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto in order to determine what the Council can do to further support Afghanistan and bring peace and stability to the region.

Today's briefing by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reminds us that comprehensive solutions are required for Afghanistan. Japan has been cooperating with UNODC on counter-narcotics, and we are encouraged by its integrated programme approach to addressing narcotics from a variety of angles. Afghanistan is at its core an

agricultural nation. We are providing support to allow Afghanistan to fight poverty not with poppies, but with the revival of its legitimate agricultural sector. We envision regional cooperation in which Afghanistan's expanded agricultural productivity allows it to export products to neighbouring countries and to become a hub between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean. That approach is in the spirit of the recent Heart of Asia Conference.

Afghanistan possesses the potential for self-reliance, making its dire security situation all the more unfortunate. The unstable environment impedes opportunities for development, while we see dangerous signs of growing extremism. Japan provides $130 million in security assistance each year, but the increased capacity of the ANDSF will depend not only on international support but also on strengthened governance by the National Unity Government, built on a foundation of economic development. Most of all, we firmly believe that an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process is the determining factor in achieving a sustainable resolution to the conflict

The many countries that gathered for the Brussels Conference are eager to witness concrete progress in development. Similarly, the Council is eager to witness concrete progress in security. Both the international community and the National Unity Government must translate their commitments into action in order to achieve those concrete results. If security is strengthened, it will provide a vital foundation for regional cooperation and economic development. Japan will deepen dialogue with various stakeholders and seek progress in the Council going forward.

Mrs. Shwalger (New Zealand): New Zealand too thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto for his dedication to delivering on the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, particularly in such a difficult operating environment.

The year 2016 has seen its share of ups and downs for Afghanistan. As we have heard this morning, the Taliban's offensive has intensified over the past year, with armed clashes at record levels. The cost of weathering this storm has been considerable. The Afghan economy has faced severe challenges in 2016, including a significant drop in investment. A sharp increase in the number of internally displaced persons, resulting from ongoing insecurity, and a large increase in returnees from Pakistan will place additional stress on the already challenging humanitarian situation.

September marked the two-year anniversary of the National Unity Government. Efforts over the past few months to provide a more united leadership have been welcome, but divisions within the Government remain evident, as witnessed by the Parliament's recent dismissal of seven ministers.

The conclusion of a peace agreement with Hezb-i-Islami also represented a positive, if modest, step towards long-term peace and reconciliation. However, prospects for peace talks with the Taliban appear to have dimmed in the near term.

On a more positive note, we welcome the international community's recommitment of support to Afghanistan for another four years at the NATO Warsaw Summit and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. New Zealand stood with others to demonstrate its enduring commitment to the people of Afghanistan. We did so without hesitation. The cost of failure would be too great.

History has shown us that no amount of international support can by itself bring peace and security to Afghanistan. As my Minister stressed to the Council in September (see S/PV.7771), the future of Afghanistan lies in the hands of its Government and its people. A unified and effective National Unity Government — one that puts the interests of its people first — will be essential for success.

We recognize the scale and complexity of the challenges the Government faces. Key among them is tackling an emboldened Taliban insurgency. The insecurity brought about by the continued offensive undermines progress across the board. Experience tells us that peace and reconciliation with the Taliban demands a multifaceted approach. The Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces have a vital role to play in meeting these challenges.

Beyond the battlefield, the Taliban's ability to wage war needs to be constrained. There is an urgent need to tackle the flow of narcotics, funding and personnel to the Taliban and other insurgents. The same can be said of funding from illegal mining.

We also need to see concerted, good-faith efforts by others in the region to halt the supply of funding, weapons and personnel to the Taliban and to support the establishment of a viable peace process. In particular,

the enormous trust deficit between Afghanistan and Pakistan needs to be bridged. These tensions filter down to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), where consensus decision-making regularly allows politically motivated stalling to prevent the most basic and necessary of actions from being taken.

The freezing of assets to prevent them from being used to fund the Taliban's insurgency has been blocked. Even proposals to meet with regional States have been denied. Such behaviour has time and again frustrated practical action that could support peace and reconciliation efforts on the ground. It also undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the 1988 Committee and, by extension, the Council itself. We urge all parties to make a concerted effort to rebuild trust. The alternative will be extremely costly for all involved.

The challenges faced by the National Unity Government in achieving long-term peace and security are many and daunting, but it will not have to walk that road alone, as many have reassured Afghanistan this morning. For its part, New Zealand will remain a partner to Afghanistan in 2017 and beyond.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I would like to inform the Council that, based on news coming in to us, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Turkey, Mr. Andrey Karlov, has been shot. He is seriously wounded and is being transferred to a hospital in Ankara. We have no further details at this point.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for informing us of that terrible incident.

I would like to begin by warmly thanking our briefers, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Mr. Yury Fedotov and Ambassador Van Bohemen and Ambassador Saikal.

France associates itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Two years since the establishment of the Government of National Unity, it is important to underscore that progress has been made. The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework was adopted; a road map that defines priority public policies for the years to come was developed; and our dialogue aimed at halting migration towards Europe resulted in the signing of an agreement. Those efforts must be welcomed, as they were recently at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan. France reiterates its full support for the Afghan Government and encourages it to continue its efforts to develop and stabilize the country.

The Afghan forces have also made considerable progress. In that regard, I commend their commitment and courage. However, the continuing deterioration of the security situation is extremely worrying. In addition to the almost daily confrontations, new attacks by the Taliban and the Khorasan Islamic State — which is to say, Da'esh — have served to confirm the fragility of the situation since our previous debate in September (see S/PV.7771). The recent deterioration in the humanitarian situation, with the massive inflow of refugees from Pakistan and Iran, also puts the Afghan Government in a difficult position. In that context, the first priority for Afghanistan is to have a strong and united Government. That national unity is the prerequisite for dealing effectively with security, economic and development issues.

As Mr. Yamamoto said moments ago, the conflict not only prevents Afghanistan from achieving its economic potential, but it also bears an extremely high a human cost, especially for children. That is why it is urgent to relaunch discussions on a peace process led by and for the Afghan people. France calls on all actors, in particular the regional Powers, to use their influence in order to make sure that the end of hostilities and the resumption of peace negotiations become a reality. We have a collective responsibility to actively support the stabilization of Afghanistan and to contribute to the establishment of lasting peace in the country, with all the Afghan actors who have demonstrated their serious commitment.

I would like to take advantage of the presence here of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to consider for a moment the issue of combating drug trafficking. This is a subject, as members are aware, which is of great concern to France. As Mr. Fedotov said earlier, drug trafficking fuels the illicit economy, corruption and the Taliban insurgency, while also jeopardizing the health of many Afghanis. The report prepared jointly by UNODC and the Government of Afghanistan in October illustrates the notable and worrying developments, which were mentioned by Mr. Fedotov. As others mentioned before me, France is concerned by the 43 per cent increase in opium production and by the significant reduction in the eradication of the areas where the opium poppy is grown. There are enormous challenges in those areas, whether related to the security situation or to

mobilizing the significant resources that those efforts require. France therefore commends the technical assistance provided by UNODC and encourages the Afghan authorities to step up their efforts aimed at reducing the production and trafficking of drugs.

United Nations support, through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), remains more essential than ever to accompany Afghanistan in the search for greater peace and stability. Let me conclude by reiterating my country's full support to the Afghan Government and to the work of the United Nations in support of its efforts. I would also like to pay tribute to all of the UNAMA personnel for the work they are undertaking in very difficult conditions.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Yamamoto for his briefing and for his work, and Mr. Fedotov for his briefing. Our thanks also go to Ambassador Van Bohemen of New Zealand for his work at the helm of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

As this is our last participation in the Council dealing with the issue of Afghanistan, we would like to express our support for the Government of Afghanistan in its quest for unity, peace and prosperity in the country given the difficult ongoing political and security situation. The revival of peace talks with the Taliban insurgents were affected because of the violent actions against the Government and against civilians. Furthermore, we welcome the 29 September peace agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and Hizb-i Islami, which has now joined the national reconciliation process. We hope that important step will encourage other political forces to join efforts towards reconciliation and unity.

In that regard, the 1988 Sanctions Committee, on the Taliban and associated entities, should look into possible delisting of Hizb-i Islami, since its main leader has fully rejected any terrorist links and decided to collaborate with the Government, so as to move forward in building peace in the context of the agreements reached between the Afghan Government and that group. We hope that consensus can emerge among members of the Committee to proceed in that direction.

Furthermore, in the context of the international community's efforts to back peace and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan, we welcome the outcome of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan and its reaffirmation to assist that country in terms of development and financial assistance.

The security situation in Afghanistan continues to be volatile because of armed clashes between the Taliban and other violent non-State actors against the Afghan security forces. That has had an adverse impact on the civilian population, who flee for their lives from regions of armed conflict. We are concerned about the 22 per cent increase in armed clashes as compared to last year. That is the highest rate of recent years. We are also concerned about the civilian casualties caused by aerial bombardment by the international coalition. The security situation in the country has worsened because of the offensive carried out by the Taligan since September, which is a big challenge to the Afghan armed forces.

Therefore, the spiral in violence has made civilians the main victims of those armed clashes. That is borne out by statistics of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which state that 8,000 persons were affected, a figure that includes dead and wounded, as well as Afghan girls and boys, who have suffered traumas as a result of being military targets. There are some 700 dead, which represents a 15 per cent increase as compared to last year, not to mention the more serious fact that many of those children continue to be recruited as soldiers by non-State actors, in flagrant violation of international treaties, including those concerning the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of children. Despite that terrible reality, we pay tribute to the work carried out by the Afghan Government aimed at increasing the number of child-protection units.

In the context of regional cooperation, we encourage Afghan authorities to continue their talks with the Government of Pakistan to enhance trust for the benefit of both peoples and to create a common front to contribute to stability in the region. Likewise, we welcome the strengthening of bilateral relations among Afghanistan, India, Iran and China, among other countries. That process is key in supporting Afghanistan in solving its complex political, security, humanitarian and economic challenges. We harbour hope that Afghanistan very soon will become a full-fledged member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a step that will favour efforts in effectively fighting terrorism and other security threats to the countries of the region.

In terms of empowering women in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), we would like to welcome highlight the work of Afghan authorities to reinforce the legal framework against the harassment of women in the workplace and the ongoing progress in women's participation in the establishment of peace and security. Despite all of those advances in promoting women's rights, we still see violent acts against this vulnerable group, such as the one at Kandahar airport on 17 December when armed men killed five women employed in the terminal after they had previously received death threats because they wanted to exercise their right to work. That is an event that we roundly condemn and that we believe should be punished.

Drug smuggling continues to be a serious threat to peace and stability in Afghanistan. The Taliban insurgency is using illegal drug trafficking to finance its terrorist activities. As we see in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1049), there has been an increase in poppy production and there is a low rate of crop eradication. That is very worrisome because of the intense fighting, especially in Helmand province. In that regard, we would like to acknowledge the joint efforts by Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, with the aim of forming a common front against that challenge within a regional cooperation framework. We reiterate that an effective fight against drugs requires international cooperation, including from neighbouring countries and destination countries, as part of a joint responsibility to prevent, combat and eradicate that scourge.

As our term on the Security Council will come to an end in just a few days, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in building peace and stability in the country. Without a doubt, the Mission plays a crucial role in supporting initiatives by the Afghan authorities to face the challenges confronting the country and to shore up the State and its political institutions.

In conclusion, we would encourage the Government of Afghanistan to step up its efforts, along with the constructive support of the international community, to bring about a broad and inclusive political process that will lead to enduring peace and to ensure that the State has more control over all its territory and exercises greater sovereignty over its resources for the benefit of its people.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I join my colleagues in thanking the briefers for the useful information we heard under this agenda item at the beginning of the meeting, the scope and diversity of which were surprising.

Many aspects have been highlighted here with regard to the current situation in Afghanistan. Egypt commends the Afghan Government for the major efforts they made to put together a National Framework for Peace and Development in Afghanistan. The international community has welcomed the plan, which was an important element in the success of the ministerial-level Brussels Conference on Afghanistan taht took place at the beginning of October. We also welcome the commitment displayed by the international community in order to continue politically and financially supporting Afghanistan. And we also welcome the statements made at that Conference with regard to the intention to provide $15.2 billion between now and 2020.

We urge the international community to honour its commitments to support the ambitious reform plan put together by the Government of National Unity. In the same vein, we congratulate the people and the Government of Afghanistan on the positive development represented by the peace agreement signed at the end of September between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin). We hope that this will be an example followed by other Afghan factions and that it will lead to peace throughout Afghanistan.

Terrorism remains the greatest challenge facing Afghanistan. The Government's efforts aimed at countering terrorism along with the international support it has garnered for that purpose is the most suitable way to put an end to this phenomenon, as is the case in many regions of the world — be it in Central Asia or other regions of the world. The ongoing activities and spread of Da'esh/Khorasan Province in Afghanistan is a major danger, and we must be relentless in our efforts to combat it by pooling the efforts of the international community.

On the other hand, drug trafficking in Afghanistan is a parallel threat to that of terrorism. The growth of this problem, as was highlighted in the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime published in October represents a step back in combating drug trafficking. The figures in the report show that drug trafficking fuels illegal activities, central among them

terrorist groups and armed militias. It is therefore essential to encourage international and regional cooperation in order to fight drug trafficking. In that regard, we appreciate the convening of the Central Asian conference on drug trafficking in Afghanistan, which was recently organized by Tajikistan.

The worsening of the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan in recent months is an additional challenge for Afghanistan, and the international community must shoulder its responsibilities and provide adequate support to the Afghan Government in order to help it meet that challenge. The report (S/2016/1049) of the Secretary-General illustrates how serious the situation is.

Egypt maintains strong, friendly relations with the people and the Government of Afghanistan. We are always ready to support stabilization efforts throughout the Afghan territory and we are always ready to support the efforts of the Afghan Government in combating terrorism.

In addition to its efforts to promote development and improve the living conditions of Afghans, the Egyptian Agency for Partnership and Development marshalls coordination among various Egyptian agencies to respond to the needs of Afghanistan. Our strategic training programmes for Afghan armed forces and police are an example of how successful that cooperation can be, and they fill an important need in Afghanistan thanks to Egyptian expertise in those areas. That has enabled us to train 2,567 Afghan police officers. Egypt also provided LE1 million Egyptian in humanitarian assistance, in addition to training for nurses, diplomats and legal experts, as well as assistance for more than 500 Afghani students at Al-Azhar University. Moreover, we have deployed efforts in Kabul to raise awareness among the public with regard to tolerance with regard to Islam. We promote assistance and cooperation in other areas as well, especially in the field of energy, in particular renewable energy.

Lastly, Egypt reiterates its support and solidarity with the Government of Afghanistan in its attempts to achieve peace and stability. The goal is the same as the goal of combating terrorism. In that regard, we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to the Ambassador of New Zealand, who chairs the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto and Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Fedotov for their interesting briefings. I would also like to thank Ambassador of New Zealand, Mr. Gerard van Bohemen, and his entire team for their outstanding efforts at the healm of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).

While the Council's attention is focused on the very serious situations in other parts of the world, the report (S/2016/1049) of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan nevertheless serves to remind us of the huge political, security and humanitarian challenges that that country continues to face, in spite of the progress achieved, in particular by the Afghan Government. As part of that progress, I want to commend the efforts of Afghan officials in promoting political dialogue, national unity, peace and stability in the country. That progress has lead to a relative easing of tensions on the political front, as witnessed by the signing of a peace agreement on 29 September between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin). Such momentum towards dialogue should be encouraged, as it could bring us closer to our main goal of reducing the number of armed groups that pose an ongoing threat to Afghanistan.

On the security front, however, much remains to be done. Armed gangs and terrorist groups continue to threaten the population and carry out attacks. With regard to the Taliban, no tangible results have been achieved so far, unfortunately. In fact, they have continued, and even stepped up their offensive, with various attacks in different parts of the country. At the same time, we should note that the pace of asymmetric attacks, including killings and abductions, have increased, along with its trail of tragedy. My delegation therefore urges that every effort be made to convince the Taliban of the need to engage in unconditional dialogue with the Afghan Government.

Also with regard to security, we should welcome the growing strength of the Afghan security forces. We should also commend the involvement of international forces in support of the Afghan army in fighting the Islamic State.

The security situation I have described and ongoing challenges in combating drug trafficking,continue to have devastating consequences on civilians and on respect for human rights. Evidence of this, according to

the report, is the heavy price paid by civilian victims, mainly women and children, especially during the air strikes carried out against the Taliban in the city of Kunduz.

In the area of human rights, while we welcome the Government's legislation to protect women against harassment, we would like to echo the concerns of the Ministry of Women's Affairs with regard the persistent obstacles that women encounter in participating and advancing in State institutions. We call on the United Nations to continue to take into account the voice of women, who, as emphasized in the report, play a crucial role in fostering a peaceful society and challenging radical ideologies, as well as in preventing violent extremism.

My delegation would also like to commend the working group established by the Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Boards and would like the rules of engagement to take into greater account the safeguarding of the lives and physical integrity of innocent civilians. I would also like to align myself with the Secretary-General in solemnly calling for protecting the increasing number of displaced persons. Their quality of life undoubtedly depends on their finding a permanent home, the allocation of land and the provision of substantial support.

As we have seen, the Afghan Government continues to embark upon a path of constructive political and economic development and good governance in spite of the difficulties that the country faces on the road to peace and development. At this point, I would like to make a solemn appeal to the countries of the region, to the international community as a whole and to private investors to intensify their efforts and increase their support to the Government and the people of Afghanistan in their quest for economic and social development. In that respect, we need to acknowledge that the commitments made at the NATO Summit and at the Brussels Conference offer opportunities for initiating crucial reforms, particularly in poverty reduction, governance, establishing the rule of law and the carrying out of elections.

The surge of international solidarity generated at the Brussels Conference, which led to pledges by different partners in the amount of approximately $15.2 billion to contribute to the development priorities of the country until 2020, should be praised. Those commendable pledges must be followed by the disbursement of the funds so that Afghanistan can once and for all turn the page on this dark chapter in its long and glorious history.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Senegal's support to Mr. Yamamoto and the entire Mission and commend the Government of Afghanistan for its efforts to promote peace, stability and development in the country.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Yamamoto, and to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Fedotov, for their briefings. We are also grateful to Ambassador Gerard van Bohemen of New Zealand, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), and we praise his outstanding work in steering the Committee over the past two years.

The security and development assistance commitments for the next four years made by the international community to Afghanistan and its Government during the July 2016 NATO Summit, the October 2015 Brussels Conference, in which pledges were made to assist the country in overcoming the enormous challenges it faces, and the recent Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia/Istanbul Process, which took a strong stand against terrorism, were instances where political will and a tangible commitment to the country were translated into initiatives by the international community in support of Afghanistan that are expected to advance the vitally needed stabilization and reform efforts embodied in the Afghan National Peace and Development Framework.

However, persistent political tensions, increasing numbers of security incidents, rising numbers of internally displaced persons and returning refugees, a harsh economic environment and a stalled peace process are some key elements portrayed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2016/1049). The UNODC's *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2016* reveals a substantial expansion in areas of opium poppy cultivation and exponentially increasing opium production and a decrease in eradication efforts due to financing restrictions and the security situation.

Even given the great dependence of the country on the drugs economy and the latter's role in fuelling corruption and in the financing of insurgents and terrorists, with a view to translating into action the international community consensus, assistance should

be stepped up in the eradication efforts and in finding alternatives to poppy cultivation and opium production, by diversifying the country's economy. We welcome the establishment of the national drug action plan, which serves to underscore the Afghan Government's willingness and determination to counter illicit production and trafficking and to reduce demand.

On a different note, despite the immense difficulties, the measures taken by the Government to promote women's rights and their economic empowerment are very encouraging. The holding of Global Open Day events throughout the country, in which Afghan women underlined their role in fostering a peaceful society, including in preventing violent extremism, and the need to implement resolution 1325 (2000) and legal frameworks protecting the rights of women, especially from violence, are is an example of such measures.

Regretfully, little progress has been made on the road to peace. We took good note of the peace agreement between the Government and the Hizb-i Islami, in the expectation that the agreement would be fully implemented with a view to reducing violence and promoting reconciliation, while the Taliban movement continues to engage in a spree of violence and no progress has taken place in the search for a peace settlement. In that regard, we join special the Special Representative in calling the Taliban to embrace dialogue and a political process without conditions, which could lead to the achievement of peace in the country.

The strengthening of regional cooperation is key to the attainment of progress in the search for peace. We regret that relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan remain strained, and it is our hope that dialogue will proceed positively and bear results, due to the importance of relations between the two countries for peace and development in the region. We commend the renewed commitment of the trilateral cooperation between Afghanistan, Iran and India, the deepening of engagement of Gulf States in the pursuit of peace, and infrastructure and security development with Central Asian States.

In conclusion, we would like to express our support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which is operating in such a challenging environment, and to thank it for its contribution to peace and stability in Afghanistan. We would also like to reiterate our solidarity with the Government and the people of Afghanistan as they face immense challenges. We fully share the view that the country's main priority should be to reinvigorate the peace and reconciliation processes and that the international community must maintain its commitment to the economic and social development and the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the light of your announcement, Mr. President, I would first like to express my solidarity with the delegation of the Russian Federation in the face of the attack suffered by the Russian Ambassador in Ankara, victim of the unreasonable and the intolerant.

I am grateful to the briefers for their valuable, enlightening and complementary briefings, which described the difficult reality that Afghanistan is experiencing today. Once again, through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto, we wish to reiterate our gratitude to all United Nations staff, while underscoring the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in the fulfilment of its mandate and of those involved in the delivery of humanitarian aid throughout the country, who, despite working in extremely arduous conditions and being victims of frequent attacks, continue to bring a measure of relief to the people who need it so much.

We also welcome and commend the work that has been done over the past two years by New Zealand as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). We wish every success to Japan, which will take up the position in January.

Uruguay reiterates its call upon the Afghan Government and urges its authorities to continue on the path towards lasting peace. In that respect, I welcome the activities undertaken by the Government to achieve the peace so long desired by the Afghan people. The peace agreement signed recently by the Government and the High Peace Council with Hezb-i-Islami, on 22 September, represents an important step forward and reflects the efforts of the Government to initiate a dialogue. We hope that this step will serve as an example and as a way to achieve dialogue and direct talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, so as to create conditions conducive to the establishment of peace.

Afghanistan continues to face a number of challenges in seeking political stability and meeting the needs of its people. Nonetheless, Uruguay welcomes the

Government's efforts to overcome obstacles, and in that respect we encourage it to continue to work towards reconciliation, showing the leadership necessary to reach an agreement that will ensure stability in the short, medium and long term and enable Afghanistan to continue with the reforms necessary to rebuild the country in an environment of peace, security and development.

At the recent Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, commitments were made by the Government, through the reform agenda, and by the international community, through the provision of political and financial support, to address the country's development priorities through 2020. It remains key for the United Nations and the international community to provide support and assistance to the National Unity Government, in strict compliance with the principles of national ownership and leadership. The support of the countries of the region in achieving economic growth and in overcoming issues related to peace and security in Afghanistan is vital.

We are deeply concerned at the worsening humanitarian situation. Recent reports have indicated that 5 million people require assistance, some 13 per cent more than last year. The rapid rise in the number of new internally displaced persons as a result of intensified fighting; the increase in the number of refugees and undocumented Afghans from Pakistan — more than 600,000; the limited resources in a number of sectors, in particular the health sector; restricted access to aid; and insufficient supplies to meet existing needs means that humanitarian aid is urgently needed. We hope that these obstacles can be overcome quickly.

Quick and unfettered access of humanitarian aid to conflict areas is absolutely key. Uruguay reiterates that restricting the delivery of humanitarian assistance constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. In this context, the protection of civilians, especially women and children, is critical, and Uruguay therefore deems it imperative to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In that context, we call for the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 2286 (2016), on the protection of the wounded and the sick and medical facilities and personnel, adopted last May.

We wish also to refer here to the key role of Afghan women. Last September, at our previous debate on the issue, the Special Representative, quoting President Ghani, said, "the face of Afghan poverty is female" (*S/PV.7771, p.3*).

We stress the need to redouble the efforts made to ensure the economic empowerment of women. Likewise, the role of women in the peace process and in Afghan society is vital. We therefore urge the Government of Afghanistan to continue with its ongoing efforts to empower women and strengthen their role and active participation in the peace process. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1049), those commitments need to be translated into action, including continued concrete work and national financing to implement the national action plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and relevant legal and policy frameworks protecting the rights of women and especially protecting women from violence.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Spain.

Spain shares the views expressed by previous speakers and aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the observer of the European Union.

We welcome the support for the people of Afghanistan and for the National Unity Government and its efforts to promote stability, democracy, security, human rights and the country's economic and social progress. We commend the support provided to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the outstanding work that the United Nations is carrying out in Afghanistan. We share in the satisfaction at the considerable progress achieved in Afghanistan in the past decade, while recognizing that it remains fragile. We also share the determination to continue to work together to consolidate it. We join the call on the Afghan authorities to continue to support the reform process, including electoral reform, good governance, combating corruption, the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular the rights of women and children.

We share the concern at the security situation in the country and at the growing number of civilian victims of the conflict, and, of course, the common and deep outrage of all at the persistence of terrorism and violent extremism.

The international community is united here, as it is in very few cases, in its support for Afghanistan, as was evident once again at the Brussels Conference, convened

jointly by the European Union and Afghanistan, and at the Warsaw NATO summit, both held this past year.

I should like here to highlight three issues.

First, I would refer to the briefing given this morning by Ambassador Van Bohemen, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities. Spain supports all efforts aimed at ensuring an Afghan-led and owned peace process as the only way to put a definitive end to the conflict. We trust that the agreement reached by the Afghan Government with the Hezb-i-Islami will achieve the desired results and that new agreements for peace will follow.

Secondly, I would underscore the work done on Afghanistan by the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, co-chaired by Spain and the United Kingdom. I welcome the commitment of the Special Representative and his UNAMA team in this respect, and I reiterate our gratitude for the work begun by the Government of Afghanistan to implement the national plan of action on resolution 1325 (2000) and the national strategy to eliminate violence against women. We encourage the Government to continue to translate into reality, in a decisive, tangible and irreversible manner, the commitment it has undertaken in terms of ensuring the rights of women and their increased participation in public life, including in the peace process and the reconciliation process.

Thirdly, with respect to the humanitarian situation, the Secretary-General and the Special Representative have shown us the growing relevance of this issue in the immediate future. The situation is very disturbing, not only because of the increase in the number of internally displaced persons, but also because the situation has worsened given the new dynamics of the conflict and given the number of Afghans who are returning, many of whom are undocumented and in a situation of extreme vulnerability. We appeal to the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations, humanitarian agencies and the countries of the region to give priority attention to the situation in the coming months.

I would conclude by pointing out that today's debate is the last one in which Spain will participate as an elected member of the Security Council for the 2015-2016 biennium. My country has had the honour of carrying out the important responsibilities of penholder in the Council with regard to Afghanistan. That role has been fulfilling in two ways. As a friendly country to Afghanistan, we have been able to keep our commitment in a unique way by coordinating the work of the Council in the promotion of peace and security within Afghanistan. As an active and committed member of the Security Council, we have tried to contribute to maintaining the unity of the Council in its support for Afghanistan. I thank the representative of Afghanistan for the kind words he shared about my country. I want to assure him that, under different circumstances after 1 January, Afghanistan will continue to have a friend, a partner and an ally in Spain.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. To that end, let me take this opportunity to remind speakers that the presidency will use the flashing lights on the collars of the microphones to prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing or to post them on the PaperSmart web page.

I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): Allow me to express our deepest condolences to the Russian Federation delegation for the outrageous attack that killed the Russian Ambassador in Ankara.

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union. Italy also supports the statement to be made by the representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands as part of our cooperation in the framework of our upcoming split term in the Security Council.

I would like to express my appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto for his comprehensive briefing, and for the opportunity of addressing the Council regarding the situation in Afghanistan. We appreciate the briefing of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Fedotov, and express our tremendous satisfaction over the work done by the delegation of New Zealand as Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the

Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

The successful outcomes of the Warsaw Summit and the Brussels Conference are a testament to the enduring partnership between the international community and Afghanistan. Together, we will persist in our joint efforts to create an environment that allows the Afghan people to envision a future of peace, economic prosperity and self-reliance.

Our partnership is essential precisely because Afghanistan continues to face daunting challenges, first and foremost in the security arena. Since the previous debate (see S/PV.7771), Afghan forces have continued to confront a determined assault from a wide range of violent extremist groups, which they have faced with great courage and valour. Italy continues its support in that area as a framework nation in the Resolute Support Mission, which provides crucial training, advising and assistance so that the Afghan security forces can continue to make important progress in their ability to counter those threats.

But the situation remains fragile, and we note with concern that the violence continues to take its heaviest toll on the innocent and most vulnerable. Civilian casualties are still at record levels, and I also wish to call the Council's attention to reports that, according to several sources, the conflict has forced the closure of up to 1,000 schools.

The plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the general deterioration of humanitarian conditions require our sustained attention. The dramatically increased flow of returnees from neighbouring countries this year is especially challenging, and Italy is proud to support the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with a voluntary contribution of €1 million in order to meet the humanitarian needs of IDPs and returnees.

Afghanistan must now complement that support from the international community with an unwavering commitment to carry out the reform agenda, in line with the expectations of the donor community, the Afghan population and the principle of mutual accountability, reaffirmed at Brussels.

That effort will require a sustained unity of purpose within the Government. The recent nomination of the Commissioners of the electoral management bodies is a positive step in that regard, which we hope will be followed by further action, such as an agreed electoral timeline.

The fight against corruption must also be a top priority, and the recent inauguration of the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre must be quickly followed up with an effective investigation and prosecution of cases, in close cooperation with all the relevant institutions.

The renewed commitment at Brussels to the rights of women and their empowerment in society is also crucial. While the improvements made in the past 15 years are important, more must be done. Consider, for instance, the fact that international lawliteracy rates for women are still unacceptably high, especially in rural areas.

We also take this opportunity to acknowledge the important work by the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. Together with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, they continue to assist the Afghan Government in its commitment to implementing resolution 1325 (2000). We endorse their recent conclusions and we welcome the progress made by Afghanistan thus far, while also encouraging more focused efforts where gaps still remain, such as women's effective participation in the security sector. The only way for Afghanistan to fully achieve peace and prosperity is if women become primary stakeholders in the process.

The same concept applies equally to peace and reconciliation, where women must play a prominent role. Italy supports all efforts in that regard, and we encourage the participation of all actors who can engage positively in this area.

The involvement of regional partners is a key factor, and we continue to encourage all initiatives aimed at establishing a framework of dialogue and collaboration between Afghanistan and its neighbours.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

In his report (S/2016/1049), the Secretary General highlights some encouraging developments. Germany welcomes the peace agreement with Hezb-i Islami

(Gulbuddin), which gives us new hope that lasting peace is possible in Afghanistan. I would like to commend the Government of National Unity for keeping its doors open for peace negotiations with the Taliban. A comprehensive peace and reconciliation process remains the only way to long-term stability in Afghanistan and the region. We call on all Afghan parties to seize the moment and to join the peace talks.

Furthermore, we are encouraged by the transparent recruitment process for the Independent Elections Commission. That was an important step towards the holding of early parliamentary and district council elections. It will now be critically important that the Government act with resolve and unity of purpose in implementing the necessary electoral reforms.

We also took note, with appreciation, that the Anti-Corruption Criminal Justice Centre took up its work, received its first cases and held its first trials. Visible progress in fighting corruption is key to economic development, and we strongly encourage the Afghan Government to maintain its efforts to fight corruption and foster the rule of law. The culture of impunity must be eradicated. To that effect, we have called for a fair and transparent official investigation with regard to the allegations of recent gross human rights violations and abuses by the Vice-President.

The security situation continues to be the main challenge in Afghanistan. As the Secretary General points out in his report, the number of armed clashes rose by 22 per cent. The number of civilian casualties continues to be very high, and the number of child casualties has increased by another 15 per cent. Germany recently assumed the chairmanship of the local group of friends on children in armed conflict. We will continue to raise awareness about the suffering of that most vulnerable group of victims.

The difficult security situation is also one of the reasons that the eradication efforts on opium poppy cultivation have decreased by 90 per cent as compared to last year. The production and trade in illegal narcotics negatively affects the entire region, as well as Europe, but it also increasingly has an impact on the health of Afghan society. We strongly encourage the Government to step up its efforts to fight opium poppy cultivation and opium production more decisively.

The volatile security situation in large parts of the country hampers economic growth and constitutes an additional challenge to accommodating returning refugees. As has been reported, over 500,000 Afghans have been displaced internally, and over 600,000 Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan from neighbouring countries during the course of the year. I would like to commend the long-time host countries, such as Pakistan and Iran, for the assistance they have provided Afghan refugees. I also thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration for their support to the returning refugees. At the same time, we call upon all parties to ensure that the return of refugees is conducted in a dignified manner and takes into account the absorption capacity of Afghanistan. A stable security situation, economic growth and job creation will be essential to avoiding a possible humanitarian crisis. Germany remains committed to supporting the Afghan Government's efforts towards a sustainable reintegration of the returning refugees and encourages all Member States to join that endeavour.

Afghanistan represents Germany's single-largest engagement in a foreign country in both civilian and military terms. At the Brussels Conference, we pledged to support the Afghan Government with substantial financial resources. Germany remains committed to supporting Afghanistan in close cooperation with the Government and our international partners.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Munir (Pakistan): I would like to begin by offering our heartfelt condolences to the Russian delegation in connection with the shooting of the Ambassador in Ankara.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/1049) and Special Representative Yamamoto for his briefing. We appreciate the resolve of the Afghan leaders to work together to address their differences in a spirit of cooperation. We agree with the Secretary-General that a united Afghan Government is imperative if the country is to effectively address its multiple challenges.

Afghanistan's continuing political volatility, coupled with the uncertain security and economic situation, remains a cause of concern for the international community. In Brussels, we collectively renewed our commitment to supporting Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve security and economic development over the next decade and a half. Pakistan will continue to support regional and international

efforts in that regard. The $500 million commitment we made in Brussels was an expression of our firm resolve never to abandon Afghanistan. Our participation in the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Amritsar, despite the problems of escalation on the line of control and the working boundary, testified to our unflinching commitment to lasting peace in Afghanistan and the region. While external support is critical, it is no substitute for internal political stability. The Afghan Government's successful implementation of reforms and active promotion of peace and reconciliation depend upon it.

The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces have bravely tried to stand their ground, but the security situation continues to deteriorate. The presence of large numbers of terrorist, violent and extremist groups and organizations in the ungoverned areas of the country are a continued challenge to the long-term stability of Afghanistan and its neighbours. The security situation in Afghanistan is complex. The drivers of the recent surge in violence lie within Afghanistan, not outside it. We need to objectively evaluate the efforts to address the deteriorating security situation. I reiterate Pakistan's firm commitment to fighting terrorism and eliminating every kind of terrorist network. We reject the unsubstantiated assertion that the Taliban reorganized in Pakistan during the winter. Terrorist sanctuaries have in fact shifted to Afghanistan, owing to our successful counter-terrorism operation Zarb-e-Azb, the results of which have been widely acknowledged by the international community. Nevertheless, as Pakistan has always stressed, robust border management is critical to countering cross-border movement. We do not understand the logic behind resistance to operationalizing that much-needed mechanism. It is somewhat disingenuous to propose a regional mechanism when Kabul is unwilling even to work bilaterally with us on the issue.

The peace and reconciliation process has yet to produce results, and we understand Afghan frustration about that. But it is not due to lack of effort on our part. We have continued to persist sincerely and wholeheartedly, but we can only facilitate. The Afghan parties have to conclude that military means cannot bring peace and that reconciliation is the only way to achieve lasting stability. All our efforts must be directed towards achieving a politically negotiated settlement through an Afghan-led and -owned peace process. We believe that all the members of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group must redouble their efforts to reach that goal. Efforts that undermine peace and reconciliation must be avoided. Implementing the agreed-on approaches faithfully, and maintaining trust among the partners, continue to be fundamental to furthering peace and reconciliation. The Afghan Government has signed a peace agreement with the Hizb-i Islami, and its implementation could serve as a model for talks with other groups.

Despite the negative rhetoric, Pakistan has remained committed to facilitating the transit of goods to landlocked Afghanistan through its territory. We believe that the two sides must work together in order to extend and improve the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement. In that context, I would like to re-emphasize that the peaceful resolution of outstanding disputes will further enhance the prospects for regional cooperation and connectivity.

For almost four decades, we have hosted millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. We remain committed to helping them return to their homeland with honour and dignity. We are fully engaged in that regard with Afghanistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We are working on plans to extend their stay in Pakistan until 31 December 2017, and to ensure that their voluntary return is smooth and orderly. International support and the creation of pull factors in Afghanistan continue to be critical.

The people of Pakistan and the people of Afghanistan enjoy age-old bonds not only of kinship, faith and shared history but also of a shared destiny. We rejoice in their accomplishments and are saddened by their suffering. We are ready to support them in every way, and we are with our Afghan brothers and sisters in their struggle for a better future that can bring prosperity, health, education and, above all, peace and stability to the whole region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): On behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I would like to thank the Security Council for the opportunity to speak in today's debate. I would like to begin by offering my deepest condolences to our Russian colleague on the occasion of the killing of the Russian Ambassador in Turkey. He has our deepest sympathy.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. I would also like to underline the statement just made by the representative of Italy as part of our cooperation related to our upcoming split term in the Security Council.

We commend the Secretary-General for his detailed and thorough report (S/2016/1049). I would also like to thank Special Representative Yamamoto and my good friend Mr. Saikal, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for their interesting briefings.

I will focus today on three issues — the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, political developments and the security and human-rights situations.

The Brussels Conference was a key event of the past couple of months. Ms. Lilianne Ploumen, our Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, reaffirmed the commitment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Afghanistan. I think the Conference made it clear that the international community, and the Netherlands, as part of it, will not abandon Afghanistan.

We welcome the presentation of the 2017-2018 Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework by President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. We feel strongly that the Framework sets clear progress indicators for the Afghan Government. Those declarations, of course, now have to be translated into concrete action. We urge the Unity Government to become more of a genuine Government of unity. Only a united team can bring about progress. In that context, we welcome the fact that seven members of the Electoral Commission and five of the Independent Electoral Complaint Commission have been announced. They should pursue electoral reforms and prepare for elections, as was agreed. We also welcome the fact that the nomination process was transparent. We also welcome the agreement reached with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) and call for its implementation. We hope it will be an inspiration for other, similar agreements.

One of the priorities of the Afghan Government that we support is the advancement of the anti-corruption agenda. The inauguration of the new Anti-Corruption Justice Centre in October was a welcome step in that regard. At the same time, however, we must realize that corruption remains a big problem. We believe it is important to ensure that the national anti-corruption strategy can meet the commitments made in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework.

Secondly, with regard to the security situation and regional cooperation, armed clashes between the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and the Taliban have intensified. Along with an increasing number of returning refugees, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is worrying. In order to achieve a truly stable Afghanistan, we believe it is vital to intensify the Afghan-led peace process. President Ghani has stated that the Government is open to peace talks, and we strongly encourage the Taliban to act accordingly. The Netherlands stands ready to support an Afghan-led peace process in whatever form is agreed on. The countries of the region have a critical and positive role to play in supporting Afghanistan. A regional approach is crucial to achieving structural security and stability, but regional stability is possible only when all partners are genuinely engaged and work together, which we strongly encourage.

With respect to human rights, an EU-Afghanistan human rights dialogue took place in Kabul three weeks ago. There we discussed women's rights, children's rights, torture and ill-treatment, access to justice and the importance of freedom of expression. We are looking forward to achieving concrete deliverables on these topics, together, in the coming months, as we have said. We commend the role of the United Nations, which has continued its efforts to advance Afghan women's equal and full participation in building peace and security. We also commend the fact that at the Brussels Conference, both the President and the Chief Executive stated that gender equality was a top priority for their Government. Moreover, the First Lady, Rhula Ghani, has of course repeatedly underlined the importance of the economic participation of women. We welcome this full-heartedly. Women are the key to a better future and we must empower them.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a long-time partner of Afghanistan and contributed significantly in the fields of peace, justice and development. Dutch military personnel have given their lives in bringing peace to Afghanistan. We must remember them. The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains committed to supporting Afghanistan throughout the transformation decade — a decade of ever greater Afghan ownership and leadership. The Afghan people can count on us standing by their side, in the full knowledge that the road ahead will be long. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue

to be a partner with Afghanistan for peace, justice and development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Thöresson (Sweden): Allow me, too, to express our deepest condolences to our Russian friends and colleagues for the heinous crime committed in Ankara today.

Sweden aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

In my national capacity, I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/1049), which as usual provides a sound and comprehensive basis for our discussions today. Let me also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, Executive Director Fedotov, Ambassador Van Bohemen and Ambassador Saikal for their insightful briefings.

Democratic and peaceful development in Afghanistan remains a priority for Sweden. We believe that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), through its work in support of the Afghan people, continues to play a critical role in the process of stabilization and in preventing a return to conflict in Afghanistan. We are particularly pleased to see the significant attention given to women, peace and security in the most recent report.

Peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, are prerequisites for sustained economic and social development. We enourage UNAMA's efforts to promote the rule of law, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Afghanistan has made progress. However, much remains to be done to consolidate the gains and to create the basis for a lasting transformation. Unity and cooperation within the National Unity Government remain key to the continued development of Afghanistan.

While the Government's agreement with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) is welcome, increased political dialogue with other insurgent groups is also needed. Sweden underlines the importance of the full implementation of the economic and political reforms pledged by the Government at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October.

The sustained engagement of the countries of the region also remains essential to Afghanistan's future. The constructive engagement of regional partners can create a regional environment that is conducive and contributes to security and stability in Afghanistan and in the region more broadly. A peaceful and sustainable Afghanistan should be in everyone's interest. Sweden calls on all actors to take responsibility and to work together towards a sustainable peace.

In 2016, more than a million Afghans returned from Pakistan and Iran. These people are joining those internally displaced in facing the challenging Afghan winter. All actors should support the humanitarian community's efforts to provide life-saving emergency assistance to vulnerable Afghan families over the winter. However, an adequate response plan for returnees is also required, and we urge the Government of Afghanistan to work with UNAMA and others to increase efforts in this regard.

Women's participation in society and in peacebuilding is crucial if Afghanistan is to lift itself out of poverty, war and violence. Sweden welcome's UNAMA's continued efforts to advance Afghan women's equal and full participation in building peace and security within their communities and their country. Excluding half of the population from the peace process is not only wrong, but has been proven to lead to less successful and less sustainable peace agreements.

Ensuring that women can fully play their role in peace and security is a high priority for Sweden. Last week in Kabul, we conducted dialogue and mediation training for women from 32 of the 34 Afghan provinces. This training will continue over the course of the year, with at least two more gatherings. As a member of the Security Council for 2017 and 2018, Sweden will work to advance the women, peace and security agenda on the ground in all country-specific situations on the Council's agenda, including Afghanistan. From 1 January, Sweden will co-chair the Council's informal working group on women, peace and security, together with Uruguay. We look forward to continued interactions with UNAMA also within that forum.

In conclusion, Sweden's support for Afghanistan remains firm. We will continue to work hard for democratic and peaceful development that benefits all of Afghanistan's people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I should like to express the deepest condolences of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran over the terrorist act committed against the Ambassador of the Russian Federation. While extending our sympathy to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation, I am sure that these barbaric acts only strengthen the political will to fight terrorists and terrorists organizations.

I would like to express my appreciation to Spain for organizing this debate; to the Ambassador of Afghanistan for his statement; to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA); and to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for their briefings.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/1049) once again refers to the further deterioration of the security situation during the reporting period, with the number of armed clashes having increased by 22 per cent over last year, reaching its highest level since the United Nations started recording incidents in 2007 and surpassing the previous record year of 2011. Our region continues to suffer from an alarming surge in extremist violence, while a dramatic increase in drug production is threatening our societies. Afghanistan is most affected by these problems; 2016 has been a very challenging year for the National Unity Government of Afghanistan as extremist groups such as Da'esh expand their terror inside the country.

Today, the Afghan National Unity Government is at the forefront of fighting terrorism. The sustained support of the international community is needed even more to support the Afghan Government in its fight against terrorism and extremism, as well as to address its security, economic and political challenges. We continue to fully support the National Unity Government and we stand ready to work with its leaders to help them discharge their responsibilities. We welcome the recent achievement of the Government in making peace with Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin).

Strengthening our regional cooperation with Afghanistan is a priority and a major pathway to consolidating peace and progress in the region. The trilateral transit agreement between Iran, India and Afghanistan on the development of the port of Chabahar is one important step in that direction. It makes it possible for Afghanistan to have access to world markets, through open seas, making the development of Afghanistan's vast and rich mineral resources economically attractive. We invite interested actors from the region and beyond to consider participating in the development and expansion of Chabahar.

The Khawaf-Herat railway project is another key connectivity project that connects Afghanistan to the international railway network through Iran. We fully share the conclusion by the Secretary-General in his report that regional infrastructure initiatives, including transport links between Afghanistan and Iran and Turkmenistan, serve as an important pathway towards prosperity and stability in Afghanistan.

The challenges facing Afghanistan and our region are interconnected. Recent reports of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime indicate a 43 per cent growth in drug production last year. Without drug proceeds, terrorists cannot finance their operations and drug producers need militias and warlords to traffic their deadly commodity. As a front-line country in the war against narcotics, we have offered alternative cultivation, as well as alternative livelihood plans to dissuade Afghan farmers from opium cultivation. The strong support and commitment of international donors, Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are essential to deterring the menace of narcotics as a social health challenge and, more importantly, a major source of income for extremists and terrorist groups.

For the past 37 years, we have hosted no fewer than 3 million Afghan nationals at any given time. They have access to subsidized services available to Iranian nationals, including basic commodities, public transportation, public health and public education. This year alone, we are providing education to nearly 400,000 undocumented Afghan students with minimum burden-sharing assistance from the international community. Iran continues to participate in the work of the Tripartite Commission in order to plan for the voluntary, safe, dignified and gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees. We welcome any effort to help overcome the main reintegration challenges faced by returnees and to formulate the comprehensive voluntary repatriation and reintegration strategy. First and foremost, success in voluntary repatriation depends

on reasonably meeting the needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan and underscoring the necessity for mobilizing more international support for that purpose.

We support UNAMA and United Nations agencies in their efforts to provide development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan. Through genuine commitment by the United Nations to a sustained partnership with Afghanistan, as set forth in the final report of the Tripartite Review Commission on the United Nations in Afghanistan (S/2015/713, annex), we need to utilize the UNAMA mandate and its good offices for strengthening national institutes and capacity in priority areas, as requested by the Government.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the resolve of the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to continue their support for the fraternal people and Government of Afghanistan, as they move through this difficult period in their history to a stable, safe and prosperous Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to remind speakers to limit their statements to four minutes.

I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): We live in times when the shadow of barbarism is never far from us. That manifests itself sometimes in acts like the one perpetrated today in the dastardly attack on the Russian Federation's Ambassador to Turkey. It is much more manifest at times in what activities are undertaken by designated terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

Therefore, I thank you, Sir, for organizing today's quarterly debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We also thank the three briefers for outlining a diverse array of issues. I take this opportunity to thank the Ambassador of New Zealand, Mr. Gerard van Bohemen, for his stewardship of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), and wish the Permanent Representative of Japan, Ambassador Bessho, all the best as he prepares to take on that chairmanship.

India welcomes the key message of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Yamamoto, highlighting the positive and supportive role that regional countries and neighbours of Afghanistan need to play. That was never as critical as it is today. Every time we discuss the situation in Afghanistan, we face the dilemma depicted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. While the international community recommits to standing by the Afghan people, the number of casualties among Afghan civilians and security forces keeps rising. While the Taliban sanctions regime has remained split for more than five years, the designated terrorist group makes concerted efforts to capture and hold territory. Therefore, for numerous Afghan women, men and children there is no respite from the plague of terrorism.

We need to ask ourselves whether what we are working on in Afghanistan is the wrong thing to be working on, or whether we are working on it in the wrong way. Since we all agree that supporting the people of Afghanistan is not the wrong thing, then the questions we need to ask ourselves should be related to our ways of going about it. What do we mean when we say that we stand with the Afghan people? Are we doing it in the right way? What is it that we are missing out on?

It is apparent that our efforts at rebuilding institutions, infrastructure and networks in Afghanistan are being undermined, schools are being destroyed, mosques bombarded and religious gatherings targeted. It is also evident that those who perpetrate such heinous crimes have survived and thrived only with support and sanctuaries on the outside.

Experience and academic research provide ample support for the assertion that conflicts in which foreign assistance is available to shadowy entities that fight legitimate State authorities tend to be more severe and last longer than other types of conflict. Therefore, if we are to bring sustainable peace to Afghanistan, groups and individuals that perpetrate violence against the people and the Government of Afghanistan must be denied safe havens and sanctuaries in Afghanistan's neighbourhood. We need to address, as an imperative, the support that terrorist organizations like the Taliban, the Haqqani network, Da'esh, Al-Qaida and its designated affiliates, such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed — which operate entirely outside the fabric of international law — draw from their shadowy supporters outside Afghanistan.

The outcome of the Heart of Asia ministerial meeting held earlier this month in the ancient city of Amritsar was a showing of the commitment of India and the international community to Afghanistan. A key focus during India's co-chairmanship of the Heart of Asia Process has been to bring to centre stage the importance of connectivity for Afghanistan. A well-

connected Afghanistan will be economically vibrant, prosperous and politically stable. A well-connected Afghanistan will have great potential to engage the energies of its youth and attract its talent back from foreign lands. To deny such an opportunity and connectivity to Afghanistan is to deny Afghanistan all the opportunities for prosperity and peace that it entails.

The connectivity that terrorist networks have established needs to be replaced by that of roads, trade networks and ideas for peace and prosperity. We need to remind ourselves of what the great son of Balkhī, the poet Rumi, once said, to the effect that every leaf that grows will reveal that what you sow will bear fruit. Therefore, if you have any sense, he said, do not plant anything but peace.

Afghanistan's National Unity Government has India's full support in strengthening its defence capabilities to fight the terrorism directed against it. We believe that the path to reconciliation in Afghanistan should be through an Afghan-led and an Afghan-owned process in adherence to the internationally accepted red lines, reflecting the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan. The international community also needs to send the right message, making it clear that we will neither roll over in the face of terror nor allow the roll back of the achievements of the resolute people and Government of Afghanistan over the past decade and a half.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Adamson: Before I make my statement, let me express my shock and heartfelt condolences to our Russian colleagues on the murder of their Ambassador.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; and the European Free Trade Association country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2016/1049). I also thank Special Representative Yamamoto, the Permanent Representative of New Zealand and Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Afghanistan has made considerable political, security, economic and development progress over the past decade, for which the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people deserve much credit. But the gains are fragile and major challenges remain. The international community's support was confirmed in October at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, which reiterated its ongoing commitment to Afghanistan. As noted, the international community pledged $15.2 billion in support of Afghanistan's development priorities for the period 2017-2020. Showcasing its sustained commitment to Afghanistan, the European Union, as a whole, pledged $5.6 billion. Those figures express the continued engagement of the international community in Afghanistan, based on the principle of mutual accountability between the Afghan Government and international donors.

Furthermore, the Conference gave a clear sign of support for the National Unity Government to continue along its reform path, including electoral reforms and reform of the Afghan public administration, economy and governance, including human rights, the rights of women and children and the fight against corruption. As an integral part of the Conference, a high-level event on women's empowerment was organized jointly by the Government of Afghanistan and the EU, which focused on the ways and means of empowering Afghan women to build a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, as well as reinforcing the political and human rights of Afghan women and how to realize those rights in everyday life.

The EU welcomes the priority the Afghan Government has placed on fighting corruption, which remains a major obstacle to development and stability, and stresses the need to further strengthen the efforts in tackling corruption. Positive developments have occurred, but more needs to be done, including at the legislative level. The EU will continue its support in view of achieving progress in that important fight.

The international community expects the Afghan Government to do well on its Brussels commitments. It is important to establish a well-functioning follow-up and progress-tracking mechanism at the country level. We look forward to a first round of high-level stock-taking in about a year. The EU and its member States welcome the appointments of new commissioners to the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan

and the Electoral Complaints Commission, which was an important step to restore public trust in Afghan democratic institutions. While early engagement and assistance to the new electoral institutions are paramount, the EU, together with other international donors, will be attentive to ensuring that any support to the electoral bodies is effectively and sustainably managed. Meaningful electoral reform should lead to an improved periodic electoral process.

We also welcome the recent launching of the Citizens Charter, involving local communities in development processes. We note that national priority programmes on women's economic empowerment are progressing. The European Union has made a clear commitment to the request of the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to its development partners to shift assistance increasingly towards country systems. In that endeavour, we have established a State-building contract as our vehicle to provide direct, on-budget assistance.

On behalf of the EU and its member States, I would like to reiterate that joint State-building and development efforts in Afghanistan can be sustained only if they are built on reinforced regional cooperation. That is why the EU believes that regional forums, such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process or the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, should be used to facilitate cooperation among all regional actors. In the margins of the Brussels Conference, the EU hosted the a high-level political discussion on Afghanistan with key regional actors. The exchange pointed to an emerging regional consensus to support an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned political process aimed at achieving a negotiated peace settlement in Afghanistan.

Migration continues to represent an important challenge for both the European Union and Afghanistan, which reaffirm the common aim to work together within the United Nations framework to shape a global answer based on solidarity and shared responsibilities. The EU and Afghanistan recently took a joint commitment to stepping up cooperation on addressing and preventing irregular migration, in full respect for international law, including the principle of non-refoulement. The effective and successful implementation of this joint way forward is key. At the same time, the EU continues to pay particular attention to developments regarding the regional dimension of the issue of Afghan refugees. The EU fully supports the principles contained in the Sustainable Development Goals, which foresee the promotion of safe, responsible and orderly migration on the basis of well-managed migration policies.

The number of civilian casualties due to attacks by all fighting parties has reached record numbers again in 2016, with insurgency attacks very often indiscriminately targeting the civilian population and increasingly affecting women and children. The EU condemns those insurgent group attacks, which threaten the stability and progress of Afghanistan. More than ever, we need to continue to protect the vital role of humanitarian agencies and to respect their impartiality and humanitarian space in addressing the most urgent needs of the most vulnerable.

The EU welcomes the undeterred willingness of the Afghan Government to engage with all armed groups in a political process. The only way to a durable end to the conflict in Afghanistan is through a lasting political settlement. After the breakthrough of the Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) peace agreement, for which the Afghan Government deserves credit, it will now be important to implement it and open the way for future peace agreements. The EU remains fully committed to supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.

It is important that the international community remain strongly committed to accompanying Afghanistan towards long-term progress and stability. The consequences of disengagement should not be underestimated, and we value the critical role of UNAMA in promoting peace and security for all Afghans. From our side, the EU will continue to support the transformation process so as to promote the emergence of a fully self-reliant, peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): Let me first offer Canada's most sincere condolences to the family of the deceased Russian Ambassador to Turkey, the members of the Russian Federation diplomatic corps, and the Government and the people of the Russian Federation. Our thoughts and prayers are with them, and we all share their pain and sadness.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to thank the briefers for laying out the multiple and complex challenges facing Afghanistan.

Canada fully supports an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process and acknowledges the efforts made to date by the Government of Afghanistan, despite the formidable challenges that it faces. At the recent Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, Canada renewed its commitment to supporting Afghanistan's ambitions. This year, Canada has committed $465 million for Afghanistan for the period 2017-2020. That sum includes $270 million for development assistance and $195 million in security sector support. Canada will continue to focus on women's and girls' rights in all our health, education and human rights programmes in Afghanistan.

We are pleased to see the Afghan Government's commitment to the peace, stability and progress of the country. We commend the constructive role played by several political leaders in support of the National Unity Government and the progress made in the area of electoral reform. Canada welcomes the peace agreement reached between the Government of Afghanistan and Hezb-i Islami (Gulbuddin). We hope that this agreement will be followed by a series of peace agreements, including with the Taliban. We urge the latter to renounce violence and come to the negotiating table in good faith. A negotiated peace must respect the Afghan Constitution and not be concluded at the expense of the important gains made by and for Afghan women. In that regard, Canada unconditionally supports a meaningful role for women in peace negotiations at all levels and in all areas.

(*spoke in English*)

If those present are to remember only one point from my statement, let it be the role of women in peace negotiations. I must register Canada's deep concern over the continuing deterioration of security in Afghanistan. We are dismayed by the toll on civilians. Their displacement, increased vulnerability and losses are unacceptable. We look to the constructive role that neighbouring countries have offered to play, including in General Assembly resolution 71/9 on Afghanistan and at the sixth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia. In particular, we call on Afghanistan's neighbours to work with the Government of Afghanistan to better coordinate and manage the return of Afghan refugees.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not also extend Canada's sincere appreciation to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), Ambassador Gerard van Bohemen. His leadership over the past two years and the Committee's perspectives on how to advance prospects for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan are invaluable. Canada welcomes the recommendations made to further curtail the Taliban's activities. Those include updating and strengthening the implementation of sanctions measures, eliminating revenue flows to the Taliban and engaging closely with the Government of Afghanistan and regional actors. We look forward to working with the incoming Chair, the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, in carrying out those recommendations in order advance peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Canada stands with the Afghan people, especially Afghan women and girls, as they strive for a more secure, prosperous and peaceful future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): I join others in expressing our sincere condolences to our Russian colleagues for the sad events of today in Istanbul and for the passing of their Ambassador. I very much sit with others in feeling the weight of that awful situation.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/1049) on Afghanistan and all today's briefers.

As 2016 draws to a close, we reflect on a year for Afghanistan of formidable efforts, concrete commitments and sobering challenges. Under the leadership of President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, the National Unity Government continued progress towards improved governance under difficult circumstances. The Government has proven resilient despite the challenges that persist. We urge perseverance in addressing underlying tensions to build on the gains of 2016 and ensure that the National Unity Government remains the sturdy foundation to which the international community looks.

We commend efforts towards an Afghan-led peace process and acknowledge the peace agreement as a historic achievement. Ongoing attention to the success of that deal is crucial as Afghanistan works towards a broader peace process as the sustainable path to security and stability. We are also encouraged by progress in the anti-corruption agenda and the electoral program, and urge attention towards the work that is still to be done on planning for elections in 2017. We also welcome the continued high-level focus on improving gender

equality in Afghanistan and echo the words of the representative of Canada with regard to the importance of such efforts.

The commitments made at the NATO Warsaw Summit and the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan hosted by the European Union demonstrate strong sustained international support for Afghanistan to 2020, despite competing demands for resources and attention in response to crises elsewhere. Regional economic cooperation in support of Afghanistan that has seen Kabul build close relationships and partnerships with neighbours is a welcome development as Afghanistan works towards improving its economic performance. As others have done, we note also the important opportunity provided by the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process to move forward regional dialogue and create opportunities for economic growth. And because external support is necessary but not sufficient, we are glad that the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned National Peace and Development Framework is driving the broader agenda.

Significant challenges remain. Moreover, for Australia, the deteriorating security situation is of particular concern. We see the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continuing to fight bravely. Australia is committed to maintaining its strong contribution to Afghanistan alongside our international partners. We have extended our deployment of Australian Defence Force personnel to the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission into 2017 and committed $750 million to security-sector sustainment and development over the next four years.

As winter sets in, we are conscious of the great human costs of the ongoing conflict, with women and girls particularly vulnerable. The large number of civilian casualties in 2016 and the growing needs of returning refugees and internally displaced persons highlight the dire humanitarian situation that cannot be ignored. As we look towards 2017, security, governance and the reform agenda will remain key priorities for building Afghanistan. We remain committed to supporting this agenda in close partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, NATO and the international community. We share a collective stake in Afghanistan's future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): At the outset, let me inform the Security Council of our deepest regret and sorrow that the Ambassador of Russia to Turkey, His Excellency Mr. Andrei Gennadyevich Karlov, has lost his life after a gunman's attack in Ankara. We condemn this attack in the strongest possible terms. We also express our condolences to and strong solidarity with the delegation of the Russian Federation here. Turkish authorities will do their utmost to ensure justice, including through a thorough investigation. An official statement concerning this heinous attack will be released in due course by the relevant authorities.

At the outset allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2016/1049), Special Representative Yamamoto for his briefing and Ambassador Saikal for his statement. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/9 on the situation in Afghanistan last month, we welcome this opportunity to discuss developments in the country in the Security Council.

During the past 14 years, Afghanistan has gone through a remarkable transition process and achieved considerable progress in many areas. We welcome the dedication and determination of the Afghan Government, security forces and people in making genuine efforts towards overcoming challenges. Together with the assistance of the international community, Afghanistan is moving forward in the areas of security and development. Today, millions of Afghans have access to education, health and other social services. However, there is still much to do. Accomplishments are still reversible. The security situation is fragile, and Afghanistan remains at a critical juncture.

The NATO Warsaw Summit and Brussels Conference were encouraging. In those meetings, the international community displayed its commitment to support Afghanistan. Continuing this assistance to the security and development efforts of the Afghan Government during the transformation decade will be vital. Afghanistan eventually needs to build its own capacity in many respects. In the meanwhile, we must extend all the help we can to assist the work of achieving a secure, stable and prosperous future for Afghanistan.

The stability of Afghanistan, and subsequently that of the region, will depend on improved security. Lasting peace in Afghanistan can be achieved only through the successful conclusion of the peace and reconciliation process. In that understanding, we welcome the signing

of the peace agreement between the representatives of the Afghan Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin).

We welcome and encourage the Afghan Government's efforts to bring reforms to life. We believe that the successful implementation of reforms will bring further political and social cohesion to the country. Turkey will continue to support the Afghan Government in achieving its security and development agenda as long as our help is needed. We will continue our bilateral assistance in the areas of security and development and our contributions to NATO's efforts as a framework nation within the Resolute Support Mission.

Turkey's official development aid to Atghanistan in the period of 2002-2015 exceeded $962 million. It is the single biggest development programme we have ever undertaken. We mainly focus on projects in the fields of education, health, infrastructure and capacity-building for Government institutions. Furthermore, Turkey was pleased to announce during the Brussels Conference our pledge of $150 million for the period 2018-2020.

We believe that genuine dialogue among the countries of the region is particularly important and necessary. In that regard, Turkey will also maintain its contributions to Afghanistan through regional platforms, such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. In this regard, we welcome the holding of the sixth Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process earlier this month. We are pleased that the Process has provided a foundation to establish interaction among regional countries, supporting countries and organizations. Confidence-building measures in the framework of the Process also represent significant achievements. As one of the co-lead countries of the Counter-Terrorism Confidence-Building Measure Technical Group, Turkey has hosted multiple training activities in 2016. We aim to continue with similar training activities in the upcoming year.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that the Afghan people deserve a better future. The international community's continued commitment will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people in this regard. It should be our joint duty to help Afghanistan reach that goal.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan): (*spoke in Russian*): We very much regret having to start with this very sad duty. I would like to offer our very sincere condolences to our Russian friends in connection with the tragic death of an outstanding diplomat, Mr. Andrey Karlov. We strongly condemn this barbaric act, which has taken place in such a tense period for international relations.

(*spoke in English*)

As per your request, Mr. President, I will skip the complimentary part of my statement. However, the briefers deserve special respect for their performance.

We commend the Government of Afghanistan for its tireless efforts to advance an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. The signing of the peace agreement between the Government and Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin) set a good example of negotiating peace to other armed groups. The permanent members of the Security Council, Afghanistan's neighbouring countries and regional partners play a crucial role in this process. We express our appreciation for their efforts to genuinely contribute to the peace process in Afghanistan. We also hope that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Islamic Summit Conference, which will be held in Mecca, can make its own contribution.

The illicit production and trafficking of drugs, which is a key source for financing terrorism, poses another great threat not just to Afghanistan, but beyond. Therefore, we will have to adopt a comprehensive approach that encompasses actions in countries of origin, transit and destination with respect to drug consumptiopn. Providing market incentives for cultivating other agricultural products in Afghanistan can lead to a substantial decrease of opium production. We count on the support of the international community in that regard, together with the support of donor countries, to the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre, in its measures to combat illicit narcotics.

Trade, economic and technical cooperation among countries of the region, as well as with regional organizations, is a prerequesite for the economic revival of Afghanistan. The various different transport and infrastructure projects undertaken on a bilteral or multilateral basis have proven to be most valuable. It is important to fully implement assistance programmes and commitments laid out at the Brussels Conference. Likewise, the full implementation of recommendations and commitments emerging from the meeting of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, held in Amritsar, India, will be equally critical.

The humanitarian situation, which has been aggravated by the recent increase of Afghan refugee returns, poses another grave threat. Therefore, the greater assistance of donor countries, countries of the region and international organizations will be vital to meeting such challenges. Kazakhstan is committed to a peaceful Afghanistan and provides humanitarian aid and technical assistance, as well as an extensive scholarship programme for thousands of Afghan students to study medical science, engineering and public administration in Kazakhstan. In cooperation with Japan and the United Nations Development Programme, we launched the Gender Equality Project, which provides policy support and capacity development for gender equality, in Afghanistan in August. As a new non-permanent member of the Security Council, we will promote security in Afghanistan and the wider region of Central Asia. Kazakhstan will work closely for the effective use of sanctions mechanisms for the benefit of the peace process in Afghanistan.

Finally, I would like to reiterate Kazakhstan's consistent support for Afghanistan and its determination to continue along the path of stability, security and sustainable economic development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan, who has asked to make another statement.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan): I just want to make two points.

First, it is a sad day for diplomacy, as evidenced by the assassination of Ambassador Andrey Karlov, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Turkey. On this occasion, let me extend the deepest condolences on behalf of myself, my Government and the people of Afghanistan to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation, and in particular to the family of Ambassador Karlov. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and with the Government and the people of the Russian Federation. The Russian Federation is a close neighbour to Afghanistan and we have deep ties.

Secondly, let me pay tribute to the work of Ambassador Gerard van Bohemen of New Zealand, who has so ably chaired the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities over the past two years. He has worked with us very closely. I take this opportunity to welcome the new Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, a very close friend and the Ambassador of a near neighbour. I wish him all the best and commit myself to working closely with him to make sure that the sanctions regime will be working properly.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.